

# **Can Universities Survive in the Absence of a Nation-State?**

*A Case Study of Birzeit University in the West Bank, Palestine*

**Iyad Nabeeh Abualrub**



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Faculty of Education

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## **ABSTRACT**

The focus of this study lies on understanding the survival characteristics of universities and their effects, and, consequently, the ability of universities to endure and prosper in the absence of a nation-state providing a regulatory framework and funding. For this purpose, Birzeit University in the West Bank, Palestine was chosen as a case study. Ever since universities emerged in the medieval ages, they have passed through extreme challenges and changes affecting their external environments. As institutions, universities have proven a unique ability to survive as the main holders of knowledge, and obstinately guarded sacred values like academic freedom and autonomy. However, this survival ability differs among universities due to the power of their respective organizational character. Based on these points, the study offers an in-depth review of current knowledge about the survival elements of universities, by focusing on a set of core dimensions; their universality, adaptability, their resource dependencies, their structure, and their organizational identity. On the basis of a case study where an institution has operated and survived in the absence of a nation-state, the study explores the developmental stages and the survival story of Birzeit University in the West Bank, Palestine. Depending on interviews conducted with key internal stakeholders, it was found that the survival of Birzeit can be accounted to a set of critical factors, namely its democratic structure, the unity and commitment of its actors toward its mission, its strong organizational identity, its wide-ranging connections with international universities, its credibility, selective adaptability to external changes balancing between change and stability, and, finally, the diversity of its resources.

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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to all the organizations and individuals who defend and support the right to education for people living in poverty and in conflict areas.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AARU	Association for Arab Universities
AUB	American University of Beirut
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IAU	International Association of Universities
MoHE	Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education
PA	Palestinian Authority
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Motivation and Rationale**

In this research, I will attempt to explore the internal survival characteristics of universities. My objective is to identify what keeps a university alive in a challenging environment, specifically when the nation-state is absent or very weak. Many studies have discussed about the role of the nation-state in higher education and tried to determine the best mode of this role, whether it should be directly intervening or steering the higher education sector from a distance. But what if there was no nation state in the first place, how then would universities function? This is what this study seeks to investigate. To explore this further, it is necessary to find a place where there are universities operating without a nation-state. While it is true that from a historical perspective, universities emerged a long time before the national state was established, these days it is difficult to find or even imagine that there are still cases where universities are surviving without a nation-state. However, such a place exists.

In the West Bank and Gaza in Palestine, there are universities although there is no Palestinian state, with a population living under Israeli military occupation and siege. Although Palestinians recently were allowed to form their own local governments, but these governmental bodies are very restricted, poor, divided and weak. In any case, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was only founded in the 1990s, while the universities in the area emerged in the 1970s. So, in Palestine we have a situation where universities survived and are still operating not only with an absent state and weak government, but in the core of one of the most complex conflict areas in the world. Stability, security, freedom and good economy are sorely missing in Palestine.

In spite of this situation, the West Bank and Gaza have eleven universities for an approximate population of four million (MoHE 2006; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2009; BBC 2009). Moreover, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have

a gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education of 46% (UNESCO 2007). Against this background, it could be argued that we have found a ‘perfect’ place to examine the survival characteristics of the university.

Many studies have focused on higher education in conflict areas, primarily with a focus on post-conflict contexts (Tomlinson & Benefield 2005; Sinclair 2002). Most research on higher education in Palestine has tended to focus on the external circumstances surrounding universities, such as military occupation and violence, restrictions of movement and academic freedom, harassment and humiliation of students and professors, economic difficulties, and the struggle to preserve the cultural identity (Bruhn 2006; Hammond 2007). Other studies have focused on the gaps and needs of Palestinian universities (Hashweh & Hasweh 1999; Anabtawi 1986). However, none of these studies, to the best of my knowledge, have answered or even asked the research question that this study is trying to uncover, namely: How can universities survive in an external environment characterized by the absence of the nation-state, which would normally provide the higher education system with an adequate regulatory framework and financial resources?

It is our hope that by focusing on the survival characteristics of universities through this empirical case, this study can contribute to the debates taking place in countries (e.g. in Europe) where policy makers are trying to disconnect universities from the direct support and control of the nation state (Maassen & Olsen 2007). On the other side, by emphasizing the internal characteristics of universities we hope to shed light on key aspects surrounding other ongoing debates in higher education, including the debate regarding the dichotomy ‘change’ vs. ‘stability’ in higher education (Maassen 2003; Meek 2003; Amaral, et. al 2003; Reed 2002).

## 1.2. Research Problem and Questions

As we stated above in section 1.1, many studies have addressed the role of the nation-state in higher education, looking specifically at the optimal mode of this role and whether it should be directly intervening or rather steering from a distance. However, this will take a different perspective, and the main research problem informing this study is: *Can universities survive in the absence of a nation-state?* To answer this question, Birzeit University in West Bank, Palestine has been selected as a case study. Three research questions will be investigated in this study:

1. What are the core characteristics of higher education institutions (HEIs) providing them with the ability to operate and survive regardless of the external circumstances?
2. What are the key development (historical) stages of Birzeit University since its foundation?
3. In light of what is known about HEIs, as well as neo-institutional theory, how can the survival of Birzeit University in the absence of a state be explained?

## 1.3. Research Methodology

In the previous section, the main research question and the empirical case selected for this study were outlined, along with their relationship to the broader area of higher education research. The current section will explain the methodology applied to this study.

The case study research method helps to build detailed account and analysis of the empirical case in question (Tight 2003). Yin (1994) defines the case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context of the given case. It is an interdisciplinary method where in addition to the

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field study, different concepts and theories can be used to describe and explain the findings of the study (Yin 2003; Stake 1995).

Due to its nature as qualitative research, the findings of case study research cannot be generalized as it focuses on one particular case (Cozby 2007; Brayman 2004).

Therefore, the results of this research do not necessarily apply to universities worldwide or to Palestinian universities in general. However, the findings of this case study can still be used as indicators to understand similar cases. The theoretical inferences of case studies can help in further research focusing on the same issues or contexts in which the study was conducted (Bryman 2004).

Therefore, the results of the case study of Birzeit University in Palestine offer an opportunity to learn about the real possibilities for universities to survive regardless of difficult or challenging circumstances.

Meeting people in the field offers an important opportunity to grasp, and make sense of, the 'real story' (Kvale 2001). To conduct this research, thirteen interviews were made with Birzeit founders, its academic leaders and senior administrators, during December 2008 and February 2009. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted in Arabic, the native language of the interviewees. For the sake of anonymity, the names and positions of the interviewees have been withheld. The interviews were semi structures and conducted in Arabic, the native language of the interviewees. Appendix 1 contains the general interview guide used in these interviews.

Although some authors specializing in research methods, like Patton (2001) and Kvale (1994) warns that interviews in case studies are time consuming and can include reactive effects, they also argue, along with other researchers including Yin (1994, 2003) and Stake (1995), that interviews help in generating in-depth information, have high reliability and validity, and are useful for exploration as well as confirmation. In addition to this, a desk study of key documents from the university was also carried out.

The methodological strategy employed for this research can be summarized in the following chronological steps:

1. A literature review was conducted related to the analysis of the university at the institutional level as well as the characteristics which empowers universities as academic organizations.
2. Literature which focuses on the concept of higher education in Palestine was identified and reviewed, with a particular focus on the history and development of Birzeit University.
3. Qualitative data was gathered through a field visit to Birzeit University in Palestine, where interviews were conducted with three groups of stakeholders: (i) founders, (ii) senior faculty, and (iii) senior administrators.
4. Transcription, organization and analysis of the interview data was carried out, using an analytic induction approach in light of key findings from the existing literature.
5. The research was concluded by an attempt to interpret the story of Birzeit in light of theory and existing empirical evidence.

## **1.4. Theoretical/Conceptual Basis**

Many studies have been written about the conditions universities require in order to be able to function (Gumport 2000; Gornitzka 1999). Others have focused on the effects of the external environment on the university's work (Clark 1983, 1998). However, some researchers who have analyzed the university on the institutional level, like Olsen (2007) and Gornitzka (1999), argue that universities are actually "open systems", which are susceptible to influences from the various (external and internal) environments in which they operate. As some other researchers found, including Meyer et.al. (2007), universities are not always subject to the changes in their external environments and environmental restrictions. Other scholars, like Clark

(1971,1972,1983) and Scott (2004), who have looked at universities from organizational perspectives, argue that the strength of the survival power differ amongst universities due to the differences in their respective organizational characteristics and identities.

In the literature written about universities, many researchers have focused on elements like the universality of the university due to the borderless nature of knowledge as its substance, the culture of its actors (academics) and their norms and values developed in the university through a shared history and identity (Maassen 2003). These elements were emphasized as significant factors in the survival power of the university and the way they adapt to external challenges and changes, including changes in financial resources. Universities, especially those with a strong organizational character, have been found to be able to generate alternative funding channels once there is shortage in the present resources or if such resources are tied with conditions which contradict universities' missions and goals (Scott 2004; Gornitzka 1999).

On the structural side, studies in higher education point out the fragmented and loosely coupled structure of universities consisting of departments and faculties, as well as the effect of such a structure in making universities bottom heavy organizations with autonomous academic units - each them including people working in the same discipline and sharing the same norms, culture and beliefs. According to Clark (1983), this structural feature of universities has led to the rise of notions like academic freedom, autonomy and democracy inside universities. He finds that academic values such academic freedom, autonomy and democracy are the main ingredients upon which both the character and robustness of the university are based, enabling it to survive and prosper throughout history. Clark also noticed that these values and structures characterize universities almost everywhere and documented how universities model themselves after each other. This is as clear reference to institutional theory, which argues that once the shared values and norms are embedded in the regulations and structure of organizations that work in the same field

or sector, then these organizations are institutionalized and they will all try to adopt the same patterns and models (March & Olsen 2005; Selznick 1996).

Institutional theorists have justified the existence of the characteristics mentioned above, including universality, adaptability and the structural nature of organizations (including academic organization), to the fact that they act as institutions sharing similar culture, regulations, values and meanings (Drori et. al. 2003; Meyer et.al. 2007). Whereas new institutionalists argue that culturally embedded values and meanings are the main reference for universities in their reaction toward the external environment (Olsen & March 1984, 2005), old institutional scholars, on the other hand, defend the idea that organizations react rationally toward externalities and comply with the demands posed by the environment in order to survive (Selznick 1996).

Since these common values and meanings have been embedded in universities throughout their history and since universities share the same substance (i.e. knowledge) which is borderless in nature, it is therefore natural that universities perceive themselves as one group of institutions and model themselves after each other. (Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Meyer & Rowan 1977). Meyer et.al. (2007) add that (new) “institutional theories envision local structures as embodying wider models. Such models facilitate and direct local organizing and local situations gain meaning, authority, and legitimacy by conforming. If a local business gains stability by organizing according to standard legal and professional models, it is even truer that a local university—lacking production or profit as guide—lives and dies by its formal conformity to wider rules” (p. 8).

Scholars who have written about the response of universities with respect to their resource dependencies have also found that they imitate each other in attempting to widen their resources (Clark 1998). Resource dependence theorists argue that resources have implications in a number of areas, for example regarding; the optimal divisional structure of organizations, recruitment of board members and employees,



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production strategies, contract structure, external organizational links, and many other strategic aspects (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978; Scott 2003).

Therefore, in order to avoid being under the control of changeable policies that one or more donors might have, universities diversify their resource pools not only to remain in operation but, equally important, to protect their autonomy and freedom against certain conditions imposed by the donors (Gornitzka 1999). However, as emphasized in the beginning of this section, the ability of the university to be selective and autonomous in its reaction to changes in the environment, including changes in fund resources, depends on the power of its organizational character (Gornitzka 1999; Gumport 2000).

As shown below in the literature review chapter, in principle universities as institutions share the survival characteristics mentioned above (universality, adaptability, structural nature and the nature of their response to resource dependency). However, as we will discover in the last section of the literature review, the development and power of the organizational identity and saga in a given university affects the power of these (institutional) characteristics and makes a difference amongst universities in their ability to survive. In other words, universities should then be conceptualized both as institutions complying with similar environmental demands and as organizations possessing a unique life of their own.

By taking a case study of a university from Palestine, I will attempt to apply these underlying assumptions to gain a better understanding of the unique conditions which have made survival possible. For this propose, I have chosen one of the oldest and most leading universities in Palestine, Birzeit University.

## **1.5. Study Limitations**

First, as the main focus of this study is on the success of Birzeit under difficult external circumstances, other questions will remain unanswered. Issues such as the specific needs, shortcomings or limitations of Birzeit as a university are outside the

scope of this study. The fact that these points are not discussed in the paper does not imply a suggestion that Birzeit does not have any of them; the issues are merely outside the focus for analysis.

Second, this study does not discuss the relationship between states and universities, the role of the state and the effect of the absence of this role on universities. Instead, it focuses on universities themselves at the internal level and tries to explore their survival characteristics.

Third, the conflict in the area and the restrictions imposed on the movement of civilians were major hurdles for data gathering – in setting appointments, moving around to gather data, etc. This fact has limited the number of people available for the interview sessions. Having said that, it is our belief, that the thirteen interviewees were fairly representative of the various levels of leadership and the historical stages of Birzeit University.

## **1.6. Structure of the Paper**

The next chapter of the thesis (chapter 2) is a literature review. It sheds light on the research which has dealt with the university both as an organization and as institutions, with a focus on its survival characteristics. For this purpose, this chapter also reviews the studies in organizational behavior which have focused on institutional theory and resource dependency. The chapter includes six sections. The first five discuss the following survival characteristics of universities: (i) the universality of the university and the university as an institution; (ii) the adaptive nature of the university; (iii) the university's response to resource dependency; (iv) the organizational structure of the university based on autonomy and democracy; and (v) the organizational identity and the university saga. The sixth section offers a brief summary of the results from the previous five sections.

In the third chapter, the study moves on to the empirical research, presenting a comprehensive study of the survival story of Birzeit University in the West Bank,

Palestine in the light of the studies reviewed in chapter two. The third chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section presents a brief summary of the higher education sector in Palestine. The second section talks about Birzeit's inception as a school (1924-1952), while the third section covers its development into a college (1953-1971). The last section provides an in-depth look at the main developmental events of Birzeit as a university (1972- present), dividing them into four stages: the foundation and development of the University (1972-1987), the survival of Birzeit despite the closure of its campus (1988-1992), the reopening of Birzeit's campus and the development of the university under new circumstances (1992-2000), and, finally, the growth of the university in spite of a new siege (2000-present).

The last chapter (chapter 4) of this thesis consists of two sections. The first summarizes the empirical findings of Birzeit's case discussed in chapter three. It offers an overview of the strategies, tactics and visions that Birzeit employed in order to survive in light of the relevant literature. The thesis ends with the second section of chapter four, presenting the conclusions we can draw from this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: SURVIVAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNIVERSITY: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Different studies in higher education have attempted to identify what makes universities able to exist in changeable and challenging external environments. Based on the following literature review, five main characteristics of the university are emphasized as a source of its power and survivability, namely: (i) the universality of university; (ii) its adaptive nature; (iii) its response to resource dependency; (iv) its structure based on autonomy and democracy, and finally (v) its organizational identity and saga<sup>1</sup>.

As indicated earlier, although these characteristics illustrate the similarity of universities as institutions (Olsen 2005, 2007; Gornitzka 1999), the strength of these characteristics varies amongst universities. This is due to differences in the power and distinctiveness of the organizational identity and character between universities (Clark 1972; Selznick 1996; Scott 2004). However, before discussing these survival characteristics in more detail, it is necessary to mention the importance attributed to ‘knowledge’ as a substance for the universities work, as this has implications for the nature of the five characteristics.

### **2.1. The Effect of Knowledge as a Substance of the University’s Work**

According to Clark (1983), that fact that knowledge is the main substance of the university makes it different from industrial organizations, governmental bureaus and many agencies in the nonprofit sector: “It could be said that as carpenter goes around

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<sup>1</sup> Although the focus of this paper is on these five specific characteristics, this is not intended as an exhaustive list and does not preclude the existence of other important survival characteristics.

with a hammer looking for nails to hit, then professor goes around with a bundle of knowledge, general or specific, looking for ways to argument it or teach it to others. However broadly or narrowly we define it, knowledge is the material. Research and teaching are the main technologies”. (Clark 1983, p: 12). Clark also argues that academic activities have special features that push universities into certain shapes and identities. He emphasizes that HEIs, including universities, have been a social structure for the control of advanced knowledge and techniques. Many researchers have studied the effect of knowledge as a substance of the university on its work. Their conclusions of these studies can be summarized in four main points:

First, due to the wide range of fields that the concept of knowledge covers in humanities and sciences on the applied and basic levels, many disciplines have been founded in every subfield of knowledge, each with its own group of academics. Professors and students in the same discipline develop through time what is called the disciplinary culture and norms, each with a special way of thinking and arguing (Becher & Trowler 2001, Becher 1994).

While researchers in history or sociology have open ended arguments and discussions, natural scientists tend to come to decisions and conclusions which are clearer and arrived at within a shorter time frame (Clark 1983). Each discipline have its own research figures and heroes; Einstein in physics, Freud in psychology, and Humboldt in education (Becher & Kogan 1992).

Second, these fragmented disciplines with their own departments create a unique internal autonomy inside the universities, which can hardly be found in any other organization. This explains the importance of notions like academic freedom and democracy (self-steering) in universities. The nature of knowledge, i.e. its diversity within the disciplines combined with its status as the main substance of the university, has led to a situation where universities are fragmented, loosely coupled and bottom heavy organizations where internal autonomy and democracy are seen as the basic requirements (Corbett 2003; Clark 1983; Stehr 1994; Birnbaum 1989).

Third, to state that academics in various disciplines have different shared cultures and norms tied to their respective traditions of knowledge, does not exclude or ignore the fact that academics have, at the same time, a larger common professional culture which gathers and unites them (Becher 1994; Clark 1983; Maassen 1996). In this aspect, we can refer to the work of Metron (1973) on the sociology of science, also known as CUDOS. It is a set of norms is he identified as Communism (the common ownership of scientific discoveries, according to which scientists give up intellectual property rights in exchange for recognition and esteem); Universalism (according to which claims to truth are evaluated in terms of universal or impersonal criteria); Disinterestedness (where scientists are rewarded for acting in ways that outwardly appear to be selfless); and Organized Skepticism (all ideas must be tested and are subject to rigorous, structured community scrutiny). As academics see themselves the holders of human knowledge and the torch of enlightenment, values such as academic freedom and democracy have emerged among them over time, and they have developed a collegial authority to keep these values protected and guaranteed (Anderson 2004).

Fourth, as many nations and societies have considered knowledge as a source of power, prosperity and development, and as universities and academics have identified themselves as the holders of this treasure, universities have gained a special powerful status (Anderson 2004). Academic oligarchy cannot be ignored when we talk about higher education. With their cultures and values of freedom, autonomy and democracy, academics play the role of the guardians of the mission they see for the university as place for free thinking, learning and discovering of knowledge (Clark 1971, 1983; Taylor 2006). These values and cultures buffer the university from external changes and enable it to be selective in its reaction toward them in light of its shared missions and operational goals (Maassen & Olsen 2007; Maassen 2003; Clark 1983). In the third and fourth sections of this chapter, we show how universities can be adaptive but selective at the same time.

The next section will discuss the universality of the university as a one of its main survival characteristics.

## **2.2. Universality of the University: The University as an Institution**

Due to the borderless nature of knowledge as its substance, the university enjoys a universal nature. Universities are affected by structures whose nature and meanings have been embedded over many centuries. The meanings of categories such as ‘student’, ‘professor’, and ‘lecture’ have considerable historical and global standing. These wider meanings have a clear impact on the content and character of local settings, and help to explain many of the features and effects of HEIs. The cultural scripts and organizational rules which are built into wider world environments have established the main features of local HEIs (Meyer et. al.2007: 187)

Many researchers, including institutional theorists, argue that organizations (including universities) seek out competency blueprints in several ways, including direct or indirect imitation of successful role models, and the use of outside consultants to develop expertise employed by successful organizations (Oliver 1997; Selznick 1996; Myere et. al. 2005; Powell & DiMaggio 1991). Marginson & van der Wende (2006) argue that because of its immersion in knowledge which never respected boundaries, higher education was always more internationally open than most sectors.

Universities emerged in the medieval era, long time before the birth of the national state (Rüegg 2004). They were founded and developed before the age of nationalism (Frijhoff 1996). Although Scott (1998) emphasizes the fact that universities were established in the first place by churches and empires as local institutions, he also notes that the university, from its earliest times, went beyond national frontiers. For example, as Clark (1983) points out, university teachers and students in the same discipline have always developed and shared similar cultures, rituals and symbols, no matter where they are. A professor in physics feels closer to professors in the same

field living inside and outside his or her own country than professors in another field working on the same campus in the building next door.

From their medieval origins to their post-modern embodiment, universities are not mainly local organizations justified by specific economic and political functions or shaped by particular historical legacies or power struggles. A much broader cultural and civilization mission has always informed higher education. Its legitimacy and development throughout history have been linked to passing this broader mission, which today includes the idea that universities are sites for developments that lead to social progress (Meyer et. al. 2007; Gibbons et. al.1994). Once universities were disconnected from the church and empire and linked to the national states during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they became more nationalized representing the support of the national project (Wittrock1993; Geiger 2005). However, as many scholars have noticed the cross-national differences in overall academic profiles have declined over the twentieth century (Altbach 2004; 1995; Huang 2006; Meyer et. al 2007).

For example, European countries, who in the past led the breakdown of the more cosmopolitan medieval university system and connected the university to the national state (Frijhoff 1996), are now experiencing an intensive effort to internationalize the universities (Maassen & Olsen 2007; Olsen 2002; Gornitzka 2007; Meyer et. al 2007). It could be argued that these policies, through the Bologna process, seem more like Europeanizing higher education than internationalizing it (Olsen 2002).

However, one cannot ignore the international dimension in this process since the main motive is to make European universities internationally competitive, especially after the rise of the notion of ‘knowledge society’ (Maassen & Olsen 2007; Cerych 2002; Kyvik 2004; Karseth 2006).

While local communities and countries vary with respect to resources and traditions, universities nevertheless are more similar with respect to goals (e.g. generating, searching and teaching knowledge) and programs for achieving these goals (Frank & Gabler 2006; Meyer et al 2007; Krüecken & Meier 2006; Teichler 2002).

Universities, with their disciplinary fields and academic roles, are defined and



measured in global terms and refer to similar ranking systems like Shanghai and Times ranking. Their performance is reported to international institutions like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). They are strongly adjusted to transnational ratings and world standards, and their teaching arrangements continue to reflect wider world patterns (Meyer et. al 2007; Huang 2006; Maassen & Cloete 2002).

## **2.2. The Adaptive Nature of the University**

The adaptability of universities is emphasized by many researchers working in the field of higher education. As Olsen (2007) has noted, universities can survive when they are well adapted to their environment, and adaptation is an important characteristic of universities (van Vught and Maassen 2002). However, at the individual level, universities vary in their abilities and strategies to adapt due to the differences in their organizational character and competence (Clark 1972, 1983, 1998; Scott 2003; Powell & DiMaggio 1991).

Adaptability in higher education is mainly of a grassroots character and is based largely on incremental adjustments, which in turn build up to larger flows of change (Van Vught & Maassen 2002; Chaffee 1983). The above authors insist that, for universities to survive, they tend to be adaptive in their relation with environment. They found that many universities attempt to devise frames of reference that allow them and their environments to be understood by the universities' decision makers, giving first priority to producing favorable results for the universities' goals and missions. Weick (1988) has referred this phenomenon to the processes of cognition where university actors try to make sense of their environments – i.e. they enact upon them– so that they can respond.

The autonomous nature of universities has often led to the accusation that universities exist in an ivory tower, isolating themselves from externalities. However, several studies have proved that universities do respond to the external environment and at

the same time are responsible for many changes in our societies (Etzkowitz et. al. 2000; Clark 1998). “The university is among the most traditional of all institutions of our society and, at the same time, it is the institution most responsible for the changes that make our society the most changing in the history the man” (Theodore M. Hesburgh in Clark 1983, p. 182). Based on the literature about the mechanisms and conditions under which universities respond to environmental changes, we can conclude the following:

First and foremost, universities are selective in their response toward the external changes. They filter any proposed response against their missions and goals before they accept them (Gumport 2000). Academic beliefs and values, including academic freedom, autonomy and democracy; their vision about universities as primarily a place for seeking knowledge for the sake of knowledge; their view of the university as social institution responsible for handling knowledge; all these elements play a buffering role between the university and the environment before a specific change is accepted (Maassen 2003; Clark 1971, 1983). Unless a suggested change becomes valued by academics, it will lack a constituency capable of lobbying for its implementation or continuation (Gornitzka 1999; Gumport 2000).

One example of this is the reaction of universities to the new public management methods recently introduced in higher education policies in many countries. Many universities have tried to ensure that these new managerial principles are reconciled with traditional academic values (Clark 1998, Larsen 2000). This has been achieved when academics trusted by their peers have served in central councils and taken responsibility for the entire institution. As another example, when the number of disciplines within the same department have increased, each with more advanced and complex needs and challenges, universities have replaced the chair authority in the department which was centralized in one person leading the department, with departmental authority where professors and leaders of disciplines share in the decision making (Clark 1983; Colbeck 2002; Maassen & van Vught 2002).

Third, as loosely coupled organizations where departments and units are autonomous, universities enjoy an adaptive mechanism where they have a capacity to effectuate change without much disturbance to their work. For example, universities can add and remove units without others being affected; scholars in literature can keep working regardless of what discipline is emerging or being cancelled in the department of chemistry (Clark 1983, Becher 1994). Recent studies indicate that in their interaction with external needs, some universities are developing interdisciplinary project-oriented research centers that grow up alongside departments as a second major way to organize academic work (Sporn 1999). They bring into the university the project orientation of outsiders who are looking to solve serious practical problems in economic and social development. These centers have flexibility, they are easy to initiate and to disband, and they mediate between departments and the outside world (Clark 1998; Kekäle 2003; Jongbloed 2003).

Fourth, the survival of the university depends upon its ability to respond to its external environment, which is characterized as uncertain and sometimes threatening, but without losing its identity, mission and goals. Change and stability go hand in hand. It is therefore important for universities to always monitor the university-environment interface, determine appropriate strategies, and develop effective bridging and buffering mechanisms (Becher & Kogan 1992; Weick 1979, 1988; Sporn 1999).

The next section will explain how universities adapt themselves to changes to their financial resource base.

## **2.4. The University's Response to Resource Dependency**

Universities must exchange resources to survive. By exchanging educational and research services for resources from the rest of the community, universities obtain their income. This income can take several forms: block grants from the government, specific government grants, revenues from investments, sale of educational and

research services, and income from charity (Jongbloed & van der Knoop 1999). However, such exchange, if unbalanced, gives rise to power differences. Resource dependence scholars stress that leaders of organizations, including universities, must take steps to manage not only their structures but also their environments, reducing dependencies and seeking sufficient power advantages (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978).

When seen as a share of the total budget, support from governments is on the wane in most countries, including in European countries and the US (Johnstone 2003, 2004). Universities have recognized this trend, and have attempted to identify and develop alternative sources of income (Clark 1998): “A workable twentieth century definition of institutional autonomy [is] the absence of dependence upon a single or narrow base of support” (Babbidge & Rosenzweig quoted in Clark 1998, p. 158).

A university’s response to external demands can be predicted from the situation of resource dependencies confronting it (Gornitzka 1999). Greater organizational power of behalf of the university suggests greater capacity for choice. The university then has options other than only complying with external demands. It can manage and manipulate its dependencies in several ways (Gornitzka 1999; Hrebiniak & Joyce 1985), as shown below.

Scholars argue that attention should be paid to the survival value of organizational conformity in the university to its institutional environments, its shared rules and understandings (cf. Olsen 2007). Conformity is often of a ritualistic nature where organizations create symbols of compliance to environmental change (Meyer & Rowan 1977; Powell & DiMaggio 1991). Universities attempt to combine conformity to environmental expectations with their organizational stability, institutional identity and culture (Gornitzka 1999; Edelman 1992; Meyer & Rowan 1977). Following Maassen (1996) and Clark (1983), Gornitzka (1999) concludes that changes in resource dependencies and changes in general which are compatible with the identity, culture and beliefs of the HEIs can be responded to in a routine and non-upsetting manner.

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Resources are routinely tied to rules and worldviews, empowering and constraining university actors differently and making them more or less capable of acting according to behavioral codes. To act appropriately, universities proceed according to collective understandings of its leaders and members of what is true, reasonable, natural, right, and good for the institution; its mission, identity and role (March & Olsen 2005). Cultural support among university actors for resource investment is an important factor of their success. Universities, as organizations, are likely to acquire valuable resources when these resources do not violate their cultural norms and values (Oliver 1997).

There is empirical evidence illustrating that some university leaders, e.g. in the US, focus on resources as well as resource-relationships (Gumport, 2000; McGuinness 2004). The management of resources, their accumulation and internal allocation, and the management of resource relationships between the organization and its environment, all are a major practice to guarantee survival for their universities. They monitor vulnerabilities that arise from resource dependence, trying to reduce existing dependencies, and expectations for compliance (ibid.)

With regard to monitoring vulnerabilities that come from environment, university leaders give continuous attention to forecasting enrollment changes, shifts in funding policies of higher education, and how such changes are handled by their peer institutions. Attention is paid to multiple environments at the local, regional, national and international levels, especially to the resources that universities are most dependent on (Gumport 2000).

According to several scholars, universities focus on finding new resources to reduce existing dependencies (Eicher & Chevaillier 2002; Jongbloed & van der Knoop 1999). This mainly takes the form of adopting strategies that will generate revenue for the university. This includes improving public relations, seeking out new student markets, finding new sources for research funding, stepping up efforts or alumni giving, or generating new resources of private revenue (Gumport 2000; McGuinness 2004).

Both Clark (1998) as well as Eicher and Chevaillier (2002) have found that many universities around the world, especially in the US, have intensified their efforts to raise money from multiple sources, including research centers. They have tried to widen and deepen portfolio of third-stream income sources that stretch from industrial firms, local governments, and philanthropic foundations, to royalty income from intellectual property, earned income from campus services, student fees, and alumni fundraising. They exhibit a growth of units functioning as professionalized outreach offices, which work on knowledge transfer, industrial contact, intellectual property development, continuing education, fundraising, and alumni affairs.

Financial diversification prevents universities from being under the control of one type of resources conditions which contradict with internal goals, values, and missions (Gornitzka et.al. 2005; McGuinness 2004; Clark 1998; Jongbloed (2003). If a university relies only on governmental support, its resources are in danger of being heavily affected by sudden changes in political agendas, which are not necessary aligned with the university's main interests. In general, the tendency and capability of universities to diversify their resource options depends on two elements; (i) the nature of the university's structure, its autonomy and democracy; and (ii) the power of the university's beliefs and organizational identity (Langley et. al.1984; Clark 1972; Dill 2000; Kekäle 2003).

In the next two sections we will explore the structure of the university and its organizational identity as key factors for its survival.

## **2.5. The University's Structure, its Autonomy and Democracy**

Universities are fragmented and multi-layered organizations, from the administration down to the departments, due to the diversity of activities carried out and the high degree of specialization in the different academic disciplines. As a result, universities are not only highly fragmented organizations but also loosely coupled (Jongbloed &

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van der Knoop 1999; Clark 1983; Birnbaum 1989). The parts are semi-autonomous in nature in the ways that they receive information, make decisions and direct action. These parts are interdependent, but this interdependence has different degrees of coupling (Scott 2003; Weick 1979; Clark 1983). The combination of hierarchy and loose coupling leads to a complex system where the connections and interdependencies *within* a system component are tighter and of higher density than those *between* system components (Scott 2004; Birnbaum 1989; Dill 2000).

When the university is heavily fragmented, decision-making power will be spread over a large number of units and actors. The university therefore becomes a federal system with a bottom heavy division of labor, including autonomous departments and schools, chairs and faculties (van Vught & Maassen 2002; Minzberg 2004). There is a feeling of unity among academics inside the same unit and discipline and they share the same culture, norms and language (Becher 1994). The unity and cooperation between academics is defined by Dill (2000) as “the clans’ model” or collegial form of integration which rely on shared values and traditions for predictability of behavior. If a change is suggested in a given discipline, it has to emerge from or be accepted by the academic group of the discipline (Colbeck 2002). This explains the heavy bottom nature of the university. Changes, if suggested from the top, have to first be negotiated with and accepted by the bottom in order to be successfully applied (Taylor 2006; Clark 1983; Gumpert 2000).

The responsibility for decision making in universities (e.g. in the case of American universities) is divided among several autonomous individuals who are not ready to easily change their mind, at least not simultaneously, radically, and consistently. Academic structures and regulations have been developed to protect the legitimate interests of researchers and teachers, and help to define and defend the main areas of professional concern within the university (Langley et. al. 1984).

Although they have different interests and subcultures due to their different fields of knowledge, academics also show a strong unity at the university level. Values like academic freedom, autonomy, and democracy are shared among academics.

Academics embrace the value of democratic decision making although this leads, in many cases, to conflicts of opinion. The pay-off for this democratic decision making process is often reduced efficiency. However, as all academics are allowed to have a say and vote in decisions related to their disciplines or university, the university's decisions are more easily implemented as long as they manage to attract the majority of votes (Clark 1983; de Boer & Stensaker 2007; Maassen & Olsen 2007).

According to Olsen (2007), in order to reduce uncertainty and conflict concerning who does *what*, *when* and *how*, universities tend to increase clarity and agreement about behavioral rules, including allocation of formal authority and standardization and formalization of practice. However, he further argues that democratic systems (such as higher education) work comparatively well only because their orders are not well integrated. In such an environment, inconsistencies and tensions are buffered by institutional specialization, separation, autonomy, sequential attention, local rationality, and conflict avoidance.

The same could be argued about the notion of the autonomy of the university. Science, scholarship, and higher education embody a level of autonomy not conceivable in elementary or modern secondary education, church, local public officials and local lay control (Clark 1983). As we mentioned above, this autonomy has at times led to the accusation that universities are ivory tower isolated from externalities. However, various studies have shown that universities do respond to the external environment (Etzkowitz et. al 2000; Clark 1998). Academics know that it is impossible for the university to survive in complete isolation from changes caused by the external environment, but at the same time they believe that its autonomous nature enables the university to decide which changes to react to or accept, and how to shape its reaction toward a given change (Kekäle 2003; Clark 1983; Maassen & Olsen 2007). For example, as we mentioned in a previous section (2.2), in the rise of new public management, many universities try to reconcile managerial values with academic ones, arguing that the involvement of the central faculty is crucial in avoiding what the academic staff would otherwise perceive as too much top-down command (Clark 1998; Maassen 2003; Reed 2002).



Universities and academic communities believe that they should have the capacity to shape their immediate work environment. Freedom of research and teaching, autonomy and democracy all have a significant importance in the life and work of academics in the university. It pulls academic people together and turns them into a united force. Cases of resistance to abuse of these sacred values become the legends shared among people inside the university as well as in society (Clark 1983; Meyer et. al. 2007).

## **2.6. Organizational Identity and the University Saga**

In previous sections we noted the similarities among universities as HEIs. We discussed how universities are universal and adaptable, and looked at their structure based on autonomy and democracy, and at their response to resource dependencies. However, universities differ among each other with regard to the strength of these characteristics. The university's organizational character, unique identity and history play a significant role in determining the strength of its survival characteristics and capability (Clark 1972; Selznick 1996; Scott 2004; Barney 1986).

Many researchers found that in addition to the importance of having clear formal structure and objectives in a given organization, the individual motives of its actors including unofficial, informal patterns of cooperation and shared norms and beliefs have a significant effect on shaping its organizational character and empowering its identity (Scott 2004; Tierney 1997; Dunn & Ginsberg 1986).

Institutional scholars argue that the legitimacy of any organization (universities included) depends not only on showing that actions accomplish appropriate objectives, but also that actors behave in accordance with appropriate procedures inbuilt in a culture. (Olsen 2007; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Kamens 1977).

Emotional and cultural bonds and beliefs are the strongest type of bonds which hold the members and the parts of the university together. Those who have worked together for years will develop shared feelings about their organization; a set of

beliefs to define the identity of their place in life and which gives meaning to the fact that they have contributed so much time and effort to their university (Clark 1983; Hatch 1993; Maassen 1996; Pettigrew 1979).

According to this body of work, when looking at how university identity processes are built and developed, attention should not only be paid to the creation of a formal structure, but also to the emergence of informal norms, selective recruiting, administrative rituals, ideologies, as well as other factors that result from a specific history of goal seeking, problem solving and adaptation. All of these points feed into the emergence of an organizational 'saga' (Clark 1971, 1972; Selznick 1996; Kamens 1977).

Based on Burton Clark's comprehensive studies about beliefs and loyalty in college organizations (1971) and the organizational saga in higher education (1972), we can view an organizational saga as a collective understanding of a unique achievement in a normally established group, based on the historical development of a formal organization. It offers strong normative bonds within and outside the organization. Believers give loyalty to the organization and take pride and identity from it. Saga has a meaning of a narrative of heroic exploits, of an outstanding development that has deeply stirred the emotions of participants and descendents. It refers to the actual history itself, including a stream of events, the participants, and the written or spoken interpretation. With the development of belief, a particular piece of history becomes a definition full of pride and identity for the group and turns a formal place into a beloved institution, to which participants are devoted to. The institutional spirit or the spirit of the place is then developed and is difficult to detach oneself from.

Clark points out two stages in the development of an organizational saga; *initiation* and *fulfillment*. An initiation could come from a single man or a small cadre.

However, the fulfillment of this initiation will not be expanded over the years and express itself in performance unless high-ranking and powerful members of the faculty become committed to it. In a college, the key group of believers is the senior faculty.

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Distinctive academic institutions develop powerful system of beliefs which produce strong consistency across all kinds of decisions regardless of the changeable challenges they face (Lagley et. al. 1984; Barney 1986; Tierney 1988). People's depth of belief in the values of the university makes a difference in response to days of illness and decline (Dill 2000; Maassen 2003). Those belonging to the university are supposed to be the guardians of its constitutive purposes, principles, rules and processes (Olsen 2007).

In times of transformation or change, academic groups ensure that academic values will guide transformation. They make sure that the change does not carry a university beyond the boundaries of academic legitimacy and the university's mission and its institutional identity (Clark 1983; Stensaker & Norgård 2001). However, as Clark (1972) emphasized, organizational scale, integration and age have an effect on the power and development of institutional symbols and saga:

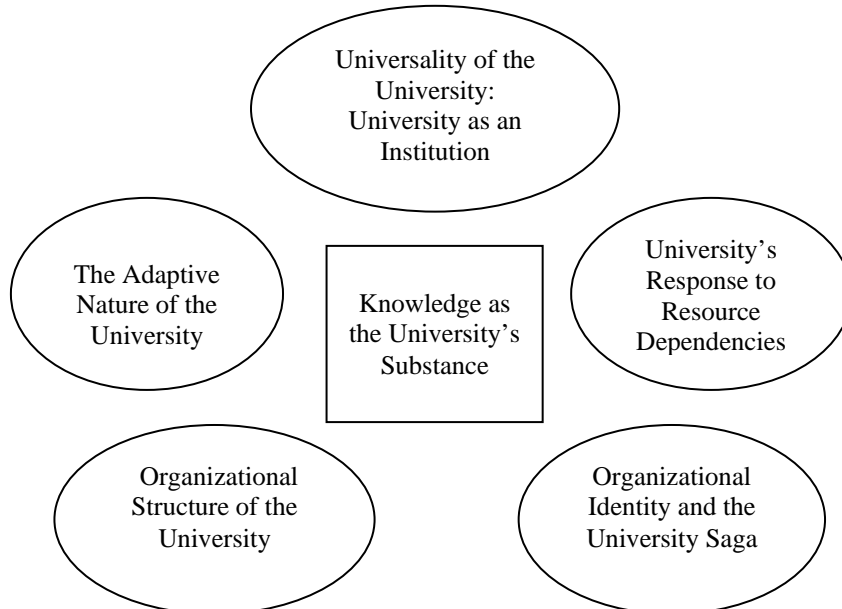
“The bonding power of institutional symbols is affected by: organizational scale, with smaller units better able to forge unifying ideologies than larger ones; organizational integration, with interdependent parts more inclined than autonomous ones to share self-definition; organizational age, with historical depth producing a larger storehouse of lore; organizational struggle, with dramatic events of birth or transformation producing more heroic symbols than an uneventful institutional life” (Clark 1983, p. 81-82).

As an example, we can see that although universities today are facing a significantly increased demand for higher education, combined with a connection made by governments between the number of students and the amount of financial support universities are offered, universities with a strong identity and long history, such as Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge, have continued to follow a restricted admission policy and kept its student body small. They prefer to stay small and excellent rather than becoming mass universities and risk losing their leading positions (Cook & Frank 1993; Watts 2007, Trow 1970).

Resource dependency theorists could argue with this point and say that these universities are more autonomous not only because of their strong inbuilt values and norms, but also due to the fact that they are private institutions that raise tremendous amounts of funds from different resources, including the public purse through research. In that respect, they are more autonomous due to their resource independencies (Pfeffer 1982; Scott 2003). However, many researchers have found that it is the strong values and beliefs among the actors of a given university and the determination of these actors to protect their values which motivate them to diversify the university's resources in order to increase its autonomy and independency (Gupmort 2000, Clark 1998, Gornitzka 1999).

To summarize this chapter, figure 1 below presents the five survival characteristics of universities, with knowledge at the center as a building block.

**Figure 2.1      Survival Characteristics of Universities**



## **CHAPTER THREE: SURVIVAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNIVERSITY, AN EMPIRICAL STUDY: THE STORY OF BIRZEIT**

### **3.1. Introduction: Higher Education in Palestine**

In order to understand the relative position of Birzeit within its immediate geographic and socio-political context, this section provides a brief historical introduction to higher education landscape in Palestine. It gives an overview over number and types of HEIs, key dates and developments, overall enrollment and key functions and missions.

#### *Before the 1970s*

Palestinian universities emerged in the early 1970s. Prior to this, Palestine had a few colleges offering two year post secondary education in addition to some vocational institutes. Among the most well known colleges were Birzeit (Birzeit, Ramallah), established in 1953, and An-Najah (Nablus), established in 1963. Both were private institutions founded by families and community leaders interested in higher education in Palestine (Abu-Saad, & Champagne 2006; Birzeit University 2009; An- Najah University 2009).

Also, during this period there were few vocational institutes. Most of them were established by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). They offered vocational and technical training programs for students of the Palestinian families who had to flee from their towns after the establishment of the State of Israel in Palestine in 1948 (UNRWA 2009; Pappé 2007; Chomsky 1974; Morris 1989). Their teacher education program was among the oldest UNRWA's education and training programs (UNRWA 2009).

These colleges and institutes were located in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza, which were the parts of Palestine that remained after the establishment of the State of Israel (Said 1980; Abu-Saad, & Champagne 2006; UN 2009; Shlaim 1995). Students looking for further studies, university degrees and postgraduate studies had to travel abroad. However, in 1967, Israel occupied West Bank and Gaza and imposed restrictions on the movement of Palestinians living there (Playfair 1992; Chomsky 1974). This made it difficult and more expensive for students to continue their education abroad (Playfair 1992; Bargouthi & Murray 2006; WUS 1984).

### *During and after 1970s*

Feeling that their existence, development, and their identity and culture were under threat, Palestinians paid more attention to education to empower their society on the economic, political and cultural level. In the 1970s, community leaders in the field of education started to pursue the idea of offering university education in Palestine (Abu Lughod 2000; Badran 1980; Tahir 1985). In cooperation with the Palestinian leadership in exile, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)<sup>2</sup>, and with the support of regional and international organizations interested in the right to education for people under occupation as well as rich Palestinians in Diaspora, Palestinian universities were born (Barakat 2008; Taraki 2000).

In 1971, what is now Hebron University (Hebron) was founded as college (Hebron University 2009). It started functioning as a university in 1980 (Bruhn 2006). In 1972, Birzeit College (founded in 1953 in Birzeit, Ramallah) started the first four year university degree program in Palestine. In 1975, Birzeit College changes its name and becomes 'Birzeit University' (Birzeit University 2009; Bruhn 2006; Abu-Saad, & Champagne 2006).

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<sup>2</sup> The PLO was founded in 1964 and recognized by the United Nations (UN) in 1974.

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Subsequently, Bethlehem University (Bethlehem) was founded in 1973, turning the De La Salle Christian Brothers School into a higher education institution (HEI), and An-Najah National University (Nablus) was established in 1977 after having been a community college since 1963 (Bruhn 2006; MoHE 2006; An-Najah University 2009; Bethlehem University 2009).

To compensate for the absence of a state, Palestinian universities formed a council for Palestinian HEIs in 1977. The purpose of the council was to assist universities with regulation of their programs and with fundraising (Hallaj 1980; Abu-Lughod 2000, Baramki 1987).

In 1978, the Islamic University (Gaza) and The Palestine Polytechnic Institute (Hebron) were founded (Islamic University 2009, PPU 2009). The latter was recognized as a university in 1999 (Bruhn 2006). In 1984, Al-Quds University (Al-Quds, Jerusalem) was established, unifying several colleges opened in Jerusalem in the late 1970s (Al-Quds University 2009).

In 1991, three new universities were founded, Al-Azhar University and Al-Aqsa University in Gaza (Al-Azhar 2009; Al-Aqsa University 2009), and Al-Quds Open University (Al-Quds, Jerusalem), which has branches in all Palestinian districts in the West Bank and Gaza (Al-Quds Open University 2009; MoHE 2006).

The main missions of these universities were, first, to offer the Palestinian people higher education opportunities of high standard and quality; second, to provide students with advanced knowledge in humanities and sciences in both applied and basic fields; third, to develop students' communication skills and capacity for critical thinking as well as their knowledge about their society and culture and the world around them; and, finally, to strengthen the values of democracy and social equality (Hallaj 1980; Barakat 2008; Abu-Saad, & Champagne 2006; Bruhn 2006).

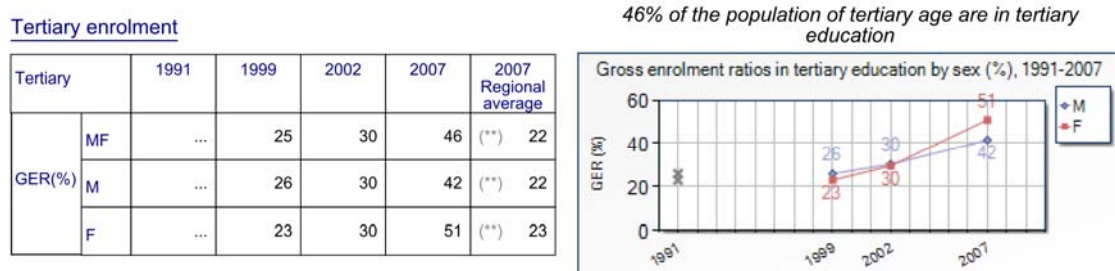
Due to the absence of a Palestinian state, all of these universities were established as private, non-for-profit universities and owned by charitable organizations. They were led by boards of trustees consisting of community leaders and experts in the field of

education. In Palestine, such universities are referred to as public, non-governmental universities (Baramki 1987; MoHE 2006).

In 1994, a Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoHE) was formed by the PA in West Bank and Gaza, which had been established the same year. PA runs two universities, Al-Aqsa University and Al-Quds Open University. These two universities are therefore classified as governmental. In 1997, the Arab American University (Jenin) was founded as the first private-for-profit university (Arab American University 2009; MoHE 2006).

By 2006, the total number of HEIs in the West Bank and Gaza (which has a population of around four million), had reached forty-three, consisting of eleven universities, thirteen university colleges and nineteen community colleges (MoHE 2006). The gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education is 46 %. All in all, 91% of girls and 86% of boys are in secondary school (UNESCO 2006; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2009; BBC 2009). Figure 3.1 shows the gross enrolment ration in tertiary education in Palestinian society.

**Figure 3.1 Gross Enrolment Ratios in Tertiary Education in Palestinian Society**



Source: UNESCO (2007)

Table 3.1 below show a list of the Palestinian Universities mentioned above, including the districts where they are located in West Bank and Gaza. Map 3.1 shows the districts of the West Bank and Gaza. A full list of Palestinian HEIs,



including universities, universities colleges and community colleges, is available in Appendix 4.

**Table 3.1 List of Palestinian Universities**

Universities	Location
Al-Aqsa University	Kahn Younis
Al-Azhar University	Gaza
Al-Quds Open University	Jerusalem
Al-Quds University	Jerusalem
An-Najah National University	Nablus
Arab American University	Jenin
Bethlehem University	Bethlehem
Birzeit University	Birzeit
Hebron University	Hebron
Palestine Polytechnic University	Hebron
Islamic University	Gaza
Palestine Technical University -Kadoorie*	Tulkarm

*Source: Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoHE), (2006)*

\* Palestine Technical University- Khadoorie is not on the MoHE list sited. It was established in 2007 (Palestine Technical University, 2009).

**Map 3.1 West Bank and Gaza: Districts**



*Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, E. Jerusalem. (2005).*

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In 2007, one of the oldest institutes, Kadoorie Institute (Tulkarm) which was founded in 1930 as an agricultural school and developed through the years into a technical college, was granted university status (Palestine Technical University, 2009).

These achievements in education and higher education were accomplished in spite of several difficult challenges. The West Bank and Gaza is a stateless area under occupation, where poverty is rife. Palestinian HEIs are explicitly targeted by Israeli occupation authorities, as illustrated by this quote by former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon: “Palestinian education and propaganda are more dangerous to Israel than Palestinian weapons” (Bargouthi & Murray 2006 p.35).

Universities and schools have been shut down by Israeli occupation forces on several occasions (Roberts et. al. 1984. In 1988, Palestinian universities were closed down for four years by Israeli military orders (Hammond 2007; WUS 1990; UNRWA 1989). On a range of occasions, professors, teachers and students have been exposed to harassment and detention by the Israeli occupation authorities. Foreign professors have been denied entry to the West Bank and Gaza and the roads to the universities have been blocked. Gazan students are not allowed to study in universities in the West Bank, and vice versa. (Right to Education 2009; WUS 1990; Baramki 1987; Hammond 2007; Bruhn 2006).

However, the interest of the Palestinian people in higher education and the support of community leaders, rich Palestinians in Diaspora, the Palestinian leadership, and regional and international organizations working for the right of Palestinians to education, have helped Palestinian universities to stay alive, grow and prosper. (Gerner & Schrodtt 1999; Baramki 1987): “As a nation, Palestinians are among the best educated people in the post-colonial world, a status made all the more significant by the adverse conditions under which it has been achieved. Due to the Israeli occupation and the lack of an internationally recognized Palestinian state structure, however, Palestinian higher education has evolved thus far in an ad hoc fashion” (Gerner & Schrodtt 1999, p.19)

In spite of the progress Palestinians have achieved in the area of higher education, Palestinian universities and higher education system in general have several shortcomings, limitations and needs. For example, there is a need for more expertise in the newly established Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoHE), there is a need for more coordination between universities regarding the nature of new programs to be opened, and the increasing number of students in some universities has not been met with a sufficient financial, technical and human increase in resources. This has affected the quality of teaching and research in these universities (Hashweh & Hashweh 1999; Hashweh et. al 2003).

There is also a lack of diversity in the composition of boards of trustees in some universities, and some of these boards do not frequently enough to be able to stay up to date with the rapid challenges and changes that universities face (Anabtawi 1986). In Palestine there is a high percentage of unemployment among graduates in some professions and a lack of qualified graduates in other majors. Up to now, many universities have made little efforts to contribute to addressing this challenge (Anabtawi 1986; Hasweh et al 2003).

However, as mentioned in the introduction to this paper, while many authors have discussed the growth of Palestinian universities as well as their limitations and shortcomings, no one has attempted to analyze or explain how universities in Palestine can function and survive under such circumstances from the perspective of universities' internal survival characteristics. In the next sections of this chapter, we will explore the story of one of the oldest in Palestine, Birzeit University, which is classified as one of the most pioneering Palestinian universities (WUS 1984; Bruhn 2006). We will look at how it was established, expanded and survived, and analyze this in the light of the survival characteristics discussed in the literature review chapter.

This section of the thesis is based on face-to-face interviews conducted with key university leaders, including its founders, senior faculty and administrators, during December 2008 and February 2009.

### **3.2. Birzeit as a School: 1924 - 1952**

The roots of Birzeit go back to the time when it was established as an elementary school in 1924. Some years after the end of World War I and the fall of Palestine under British control (Birzeit 2009; Said 1980) a Palestinian local community leader, Ms. Nabiha Nasir (1891-1951) established a private elementary school in her small village Birzeit (located in the middle of the West Bank, 20 kilometers north of Jerusalem and 8 kilometers north of Ramallah). It started as a girls' boarding school and later became a mixed gender school in 1930. By this time, the School had developed into a secondary school.

Birzeit School was registered as private school with the Nasir family as owners, and was financed by the family's own means in addition to tuition fees. At that time, there were few public schools in Palestine, and private schools were mainly located in Jerusalem. Only families belonging to the social elite could send their sons and daughters to these private schools, which were established and run by churches or other religion institutions. Against this background, Birzeit School was an exception. First, it was an individual rather than an organizational initiative. Second, it was located in a village with a specific aim of giving Palestinian villagers a share in educational activities. Third, the founders wanted to establish a school whose primary identity was national rather than religious. As one of the co-founders of Birzeit University, who studied at Birzeit when it was a school remembers: "The director of the school was reminding us in his morning speech before we went to classes, of the importance of unity and of the things we shared as Palestinians".

The school also aimed to offer high quality educational opportunities to students who could not afford to go to the schools in Jerusalem. It further wanted to be a liberal school, encouraging its students to develop critical thinking skills. The school succeeded in recruiting very good teachers due to the liberal mission it held and the good reputation and connections the Nasir family had among community activists interested in education. The school encouraged its students to become actively

involved in the community and focused strongly on cultural activities. “There were many extracurricular activities including music, dance, plays and poetry”, said another co- founders of Birzeit University, who also studied there when it was a school. Finally, Birzeit School could distinguish itself from all other schools in Palestine by being among the first mixed gender schools, with boys and girls studying together.

In less than twenty years since its establishment as a small elementary school, Birzeit became among the leading secondary schools in Palestine. During that period secondary schools were often referred to as “colleges”, and the name Birzeit College was officially adopted in 1942. In 1953, a new phase in Birzeit’s work and history started as it began to offer post secondary education in arts and sciences.

### **3.3. Birzeit as a College: 1953 - 1971**

This part of Birzeit story will explore the following aspects: The purpose of establishing a college, its regulations and cooperation with other universities, and funding.

#### *The establishment of the College*

In 1953, Birzeit leaders decided to start post secondary school courses. They set up an advisory council for the college, consisting of community activists and experts in the field of education. Birzeit leaders wanted to offer their high school graduates university-level courses of a quality that would allow students to continue the third and fourth year of their studies in good universities abroad. As a first step, the newly established College recruited Palestinian teachers with strong academic records and international experience. Many of these teachers were motivated to return to their homeland to contribute to the development of the educational sector. Several of them had studied at Birzeit when it was a school. Moreover, the college attracted foreign

teachers with experience from the United States and different European countries. Second, Birzeit College targeted students from Palestinian high schools with top academic records. When asked if this meant that the student body mainly consisted of students from families with good educational backgrounds or higher social classes, one of the University leaders responded; “It could be partially true, especially when Birzeit was a college, but not when it expanded later as a university. In Palestine, many of the students with high grades come from poor families living in marginalized areas or Palestinian refugee camps, with both or one parent with no educational background...Birzeit paid attention to this fact since it was a college and worked to offer scholarships for good students who could not afford to pay tuition fees”. Third, in order to fund these scholarships and the expansion of Birzeit from a school to a college, Birzeit leaders submitted proposal to different international organizations. They succeeded in generating funding from organizations interested in educational development, including the Ford foundation which gave the College a generous grant over several years. Fourth, the college kept its liberal traditions, offering an environment of academic and social freedom. Finally, the College paid attention to the need of having international standards in its programs, in support of its ambition to enable students to continue their studies abroad.

### *Regulations and cooperation with other universities*

In the early 1950s, when Birzeit School decided to become a college, there were no advanced regulations and standards for HEIs in the West Bank. At the end of the British Mandate in 1948, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were the parts of Palestine which remained after the establishment of the State of Israel in the same year (Chomsky 1974; Pappé 1999, 2007). Control of the West Bank was transferred to Jordan and the Gaza Strip was put under the rule of Egypt (Said 1980; Morris 1989). Operating under Jordanian legislation had specific consequences for the establishment of the college: “Jordan itself was a newly established state with no universities, and legal framework for the higher education sector was still under construction. Therefore, to register the college with the Jordanian authorities was not

an easy process”, one a Birzeit co-founder commented. The Jordanian Ministry of Education was subsequently established in 1956 (Jordanian Ministry of Education 2009). However, Birzeit did not want to wait for a regulatory framework to appear, and therefore proceeded to investigate the regulations and standards of other universities around the world, especially those of prestigious institutions.

At that time the American University in Beirut (AUB), Lebanon, was classified as one of the leading universities in the Middle East, with high international standards and a strong reputation in education and research (Qubain 1979). Birzeit therefore looked to AUB as a potential university for its students to complete their studies and achieve BA and BSc degrees. AUB was also the only university in the region that followed the flexible credit hour system that Birzeit wanted to adopt.

Contacts were established between AUB and Birzeit College, facilitated by the fact that many Birzeit representatives were AUB alumni. AUB delegates visited Birzeit regularly in order to become acquainted with its academic programs and regulations, and provided feedback to improve the quality of teaching. After a relatively short period of time, AUB agreed to open its doors for Birzeit students. Birzeit students rose to the challenge and proved themselves to be strong academic achievers, sometimes surpassing their counterparts from AUB.

As a result, the AUB decided to increase its cooperation with Birzeit College. Many Birzeit/AUB graduates also pursued post graduate studies and received scholarships to study internationally, especially in the United States and the UK. Their continuously strong academic achievements built a good reputation for their small college worldwide. “Birzeit, with a total number of students not exceeding 200, became well known to different high ranked universities like Yale, Stanford and McGill. Birzeit invested this reputation and enhanced its relations with HEIs based in Europe and the United States” one of Birzeit leaders said.

This phenomenon of following a role model (AUB) by a new organization (Birzeit) attempting to be similar to it is aligned with what we have learned about universities in the literature review chapter. Referring to Oliver (1991,1997), Gornitzka (1999)



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argues that universities as academic organizations seek out competency blueprints in several ways, including direct or indirect imitation of successful ones and role models, and the use of outside consultants to develop expertise employed by successful organizations. Selznick (1996) found that organizations working in the same field tend to model themselves after each other.

New institutional scholars have termed this phenomenon *institutional isomorphism*, identified as a “constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (Powell & DiMaggio 1991). The more uncertainty, the more an organization will model its structure after successful organizations working in the same field, and the more alike they will become. In this case the mechanism of institutional isomorphism is of a mimetic nature, where uncertainty encourages imitation (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

Organizational models can be diffused through employee migration (very common in academia) or by consulting firms (Powell & DiMaggio 1991).

### **3.4. Birzeit as a University: 1972- Present**

In 1967, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza were invaded and occupied by Israel. Therefore, the entire area of Palestine which remained after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 turned to be (and still is) Israeli control (Said 1980). The Israeli government decided that the people of the areas it occupied who were studying, working or traveling abroad when its forces first arrived would not be allowed to return. Restrictions were put on people's freedom to move and travel abroad and the economic situation deteriorated (Pappé 2007; Chomsky 1974). Students were no longer able to travel easily to continue their education, and the few who did manage to travel faced increased financial difficulties. Moreover, Palestinian national identity, education and society were increasingly threatened (Said 1980; Shlaim 1995).

In the face of these threats and challenges, Birzeit College decided not only to continue operation but also to expand their educational programs. The rationale was that Palestinians should be offered the higher education opportunities that they lost access to due to the occupation. The idea of establishing a university appeared in the mind of the College's leaders and a new era of Birzeit's history was about to be written.

It could be argued here that among the main triggers for the establishment of the university was an external event (occupation/loss of access to education). As a response we could say that although universities try to buffer themselves from the externalities and are as a result often accused of living in ivory tower (Clark 1983), they also attempt to adapt themselves to these same external circumstances (Clark 1983, 1998; Van Vught & Maassen 2003). However, the capacity of adaptation of a given university without losing its own mission and goal is highly dependent on the strength of its organizational character, internal embedded values among its academics and the variety of resources it has (Gornitzka 1999; Clark 1983, 1971). The next sections will explore how these notions are applied to Birzeit.

### **3.4.1. Foundation and Development: 1972-1987**

This section will cover the foundation and development of Birzeit University. It will focus on the following key elements and events: The foundation of Birzeit University, the challenges it faced during its birth, its funding and Changing the its ownership. This section will also cover the representation and recognition of Birzeit as University, the establishment of the Palestinian Higher Education Council and the University expansion.

### *The foundation of Birzeit University*

In their first proposal to establish a university, Birzeit leaders suggested, in 1971, a model where the Faculty of Arts would be in Birzeit College; the Faculty of Science in An-Najah College in Nablus (a city in the north of the West Bank); and the Faculty of Medical Sciences in the Palestinian hospital in East Jerusalem, Al- Maqasid. This idea was discussed with the other institutions as well as the Arab League and PLO to obtain support for its implementation. However, Birzeit failed to convince all stakeholders. In 1972, they proceeded independently and launched a full 4-year program leading to Bachelor's degrees in Arts and Sciences (BA and BSc). One of Birzeit leaders commented on this historical juncture in the following way: "If we had calculated all the possible difficulties, obstacles and challenges, we might not do anything. We were more directed by our beliefs in the importance of higher education to people and their right to education. We believed that we had to be active and not only reactive." As a result of working together as a small College, Birzeit's internal stakeholders (founders, teachers, administrators as well as students) became somewhat like a family. Their success, their shared history, and their common support for liberal thinking and democratic values established a unique environment where traditions of academic and social freedom were strong. This also made them very loyal to their organization and its goals, seeing it as their home and extended family. Together, these factors worked to support the establishment of the new university.

This seems like another important trigger for establishing a stand-alone university. It is a clear reference to the discussion we had in the literature review chapter (section 2.6) about the development and the effect of the organizational identity and saga. Once an organization develops its own identity through shared norms, values and experience through a history of struggle and achievements, decisions are not necessarily taken on rational principles and calculated results (Scott 2004; Clark 1971, 1972).

Applications to Birzeit came from all over the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, and even from the few Palestinian towns which remained in Israel after its establishment. “We were so happy for that!” a Birzeit co-founder said, “but we wanted to remain selective and not to accept a number of students which exceeded our capability, including the number of teaching staff we had. We also wanted to keep our policy of targeting the best high school graduates”.

Birzeit continued its commitment to the original vision or model as a liberal institution focusing on academic elitism and social democracy despite the changes in dynamics. This serves as an illustration of the point made in the literature review that university culture and values of freedom, autonomy and democracy, in addition to the university identity and mission, buffer the university from external pressures. This provides the university with the capacity to be selective and to choose which changes it wants to adopt, and merge between change and stability (Clark 1983; Maassen 1996, 2003).

### *Challenges during the birth*

Shortly after the new program was announced, the military commander of the Israeli forces in the West Bank warned Birzeit leaders that they were not allowed to pursue university teaching without an official permit. In spite of legal objections from Birzeit leaders, Israeli authorities insisted that a permit was necessary and issued it for one year only, to be renewed on a yearly basis.

In 1973, although permission had been officially renewed, Israeli forces closed the campus by military order for two weeks during the exam period. On different occasions, Israeli forces and soldiers surrounded the area where the college was located, attempting to prevent students from attending classes or making them late for lectures. Students, professors and others protested and organized demonstrations calling for the right to education, led by the college president. Later, in 1974, Israelis arrested the Birzeit University president and expelled him from Palestine.

Commenting on this situation, one of Birzeit leaders said: “The international and local reactions against the Israeli actions towards Birzeit and its students were very strong. This got the attention of the world, including academic institutions and media. International media, including famous newspapers like New York Times and even the Israeli newspaper of Jerusalem Post came to interview us, the founders, professors and students, wondering how we could manage to study and teach under occupation”. In his explanation of this reaction a Birzeit leader emphasized the extraordinary situation that the University was in: “Perhaps, [it was] because we have been seen as a phenomenon, a phenomenon which is not supposed or expected to exist under the circumstances of occupation”.

This public attention offered a window of opportunity for Birzeit to strengthen the demands of Palestinians for their educational rights, and made the issue better known across the world. Expelling the President also turned out to be an opportunity – to enhance partnerships. Birzeit decided that he would remain its formal president. To facilitate his job, he along with other University leaders elected one of his vice presidents to work as an acting president to manage the daily work of the university. On the other side, the expelled president worked actively as an ambassador for the University abroad, widening its relations everywhere. This enhanced cooperation between Birzeit and different academic institutions and funding bodies.

### *Changing the ownership*

In 1973, the owners decided to transfer the ownership and management of the College to a charitable organization, so that other experts and community leaders could be more closely involved in building the new university. The change in status from private ownership was also aimed at facilitating fundraising. To ensure that the values of academic and social freedom, autonomy and democracy would remain protected, the University leaders decided to create their own organization rather than approaching an existing charity. The organization was composed of representatives of the founders and the advisory council members of the college, in addition to new

members recruited among community leaders with relevant expertise. They ensured that these members represented different sectors of Palestinian civil society.

This change in ownership, along with the decision to keep a tight control on the university's funding policy and its mission, are both important aspects when it comes to accessing resources, as discussed in the literature review (section 2.4). University responses to external demands can be predicted from the situation of resource dependencies confronting it (Gornitzka, 1999). The university's actors are empowered and constrained differently by the fact that resources are tied to rules and worldviews. These rules and views make the actors less or more capable of acting according to behavioral codes (March & Olsen 2005). Universities attempt to combine conformity to external expectations and demands with their organizational stability, identity and culture (Gornitzka 1999; Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Edelman & Bening 1999; Meyer & Rowan 1977).

### *Funding*

As a result of this development, combined with the high standards of teaching and the international networking of the exiled president, Birzeit succeeded in generating more funds from regional and international universities and organizations, as well as private philanthropists and donors both inside and outside of Palestine. It expanded its relations and strengthened its credibility and its image as a pioneer institution in higher education. Throughout this process, it paid careful attention to transparency and auditing. The College appointed internal and external auditors, continuously reported to donors on expenditure and invited donor representatives to observe progress on the ground. Moreover, if the university received funds for a specific project and money remained upon project completion, the university would return the remaining funds to the donor.

Birzeit did not accept any funds that came with conditionalities attached, especially if these conditions were of a political nature. One of the University leaders explained:

“We did not go to any funding organization which put conditions to give money. Some organizations offered to help under the condition of working with Israeli universities. We did not accept this. We argued that, since we did not have the same academic freedom due to the Israeli occupation, and since we are discriminated against by the Israeli authorities; since we are not treated equally we cannot engage in such projects. Some other organizations had a policy to ask for a political position which goes with its governments policies. We did not ask such organizations for funds and we were not ready to accept their money under such conditions”.

“With regarding to expectations, if a donor or funding organization offered their support with specific expectation to the educational level, we were checking these expectations first before we agreed. If they fit with our proposal and mission, then we agree on taking the fund offered”, another University leader commented. As we found in section 2.4 in the literature review chapter, changes in resource dependencies and changes in general which are compatible with the identity, culture and beliefs of the HEIs can be responded to in a routine and non-upsetting manner (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Gornitzka 1999). To act appropriately, universities proceed according to collective understandings of its leaders and members of what is true, reasonable, natural, right, and good for the institution; its mission, identity and role (March & Olsen 2005). Cultural support among university actors for resource investment is an important factor of their success. Universities are likely to acquire valuable resources when these resources do not violate their cultural norms and values (Oliver, 1997).

### *Representation and recognition*

In 1975, as soon as the first group of BA students graduated, Birzeit College changed its name to Birzeit University. The same year, Birzeit decided to refuse the yearly permit policy imposed by the Israeli military authorities. In the words of one of Birzeit leaders: “That year, when the military commander of the Israeli forces in West Bank asked us to renew our yearly permit, we wrote back to him saying that we

considered the last permission a long term one. We emphasized that our buildings and programs are not temporal and we do not need a temporal permission with its uncertainty of whether it is going to be renewed or not”.

This was an important development with relation to power relations and the notion of sovereignty. To understand why Birzeit acted so assertive or unafraid, we can analyze this incident in the light of the findings in the literature review (section 2.6). In an organization with a clear and strong character developed through a history of struggle and achievements and embedded values and norms among its actors, it feels more confident and sees that its legitimacy comes through its commitments to its objectives and its success and that its actors behave in accordance to the inbuilt culture and values of autonomy and academic freedom (Olsen, 2007; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Kamens 1977). However, another important factor had to do with the University's external image (of credibility/legitimacy), and the support from the outside world, including resources. Both elements empowered Birzeit to face the Israeli actions.

Following the United Nations decision taken in 1974 to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Palestinian leadership in the exile, as the only and legitimate representative of Palestinian People, Birzeit University announced that PLO is the only body that it recognizes and accepts to represent it on state level relations and meetings. Since Birzeit from its inception had defined itself as a Palestinian university, it also refused to accept Israeli or Jordanian authority.

In 1976, Birzeit joined the Association of Arab Universities (AARU). One year later it was accepted as a member of the International Association of Universities (IAU). This acceptance again facilitated more support and assistance to Birzeit graduates. A University co-founder said: “It is true that our graduates, when it was a college or after it turned to a university, did not have problems to be accepted for further studies or jobs abroad due to our good reputation. However, this membership and recognition from the Arabic and International university associations added more legitimacy and support to our work and certifications. On the bureaucratic level, our graduates did



not need to wait anymore or face problems for their certifications and diplomas to be accredited anywhere”.

This could be seen a big historical leap which came as one of implications of the success of Birzeit as HEI from one side, and of PLO’s international recognition as a defacto state from the other side, especially that Birzeit had announced earlier that PLO is its representative on the state level relations.

Israel refused to formally recognize the diplomas of Birzeit and other Palestinian universities. However, in reality this decision was partially ignored. As a leader of Birzeit University said, “Many of our graduates came from Palestinian towns that remained inside Israel after its foundation; once they applied for jobs back in Israel they could attract the employers for their competitive skills. It is interesting to note that our diploma is now recognized by many employers in Israel, whose authorities did its best to stop our progress”.

This success on the part of Birzeit led to the birth of other universities in Palestine. “We were so happy to share with them our experience and to offer our help and consultation” another Birzeit leader said. It could be noticed here university became the ‘model’ for other Palestinian universities to imitate. This can serve as an example of how the powerful organizational identity of a given university and its success makes it a role model to other organization working in the same organizational field or sector of activity. Its organizational saga spread to the outside world (Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Scott 2004; Clark 1972; Olsen 2007).

### *Palestinian Council for Higher Education*

Due to the absence of any national governmental bodies of higher education in Palestine, in 1977 Birzeit led the efforts to establish a Palestinian council of higher education, in coordination with PLO and other Palestinian universities. This council was meant to take the role of a Ministry, responsible for assisting universities in regulating their work and for mobilizing additional resources. In addition to the

university presidents and the heads of its boards of trustees, the Council consisted of the elected mayors of the cities and towns where universities and colleges were located. In order to avoid conflicts of interests and opinions among the Council's members were equally represented in its leadership and decisions were taken by voting.

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the foundation of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education was an attempt to compensate for the absence of a nation-state (Hallaj 1980; Abu-Lughod 2000, Baramki 1987). However, it also shows the level of power that Birzeit had achieved as a HEI in Palestine. It reached an extent where, in the absence of a national government, it played, together with other universities, the role of the government. This reminds us with Clark's (1983) work on the role of the academic oligarchy and his triangle three powers affecting higher education. In addition to academic oligarchy he mentions nation-state and society (market). Clark indicted that in the higher education systems where the presence and the role of state is weak or do not exist (as is the case in the West Bank & Gaza) academics enjoy much greater power.

Palestinian Council for Higher Education was the focal point for channeling funds coming from PLO. Various governments around the world supported education in Palestine, sending their donations through the PLO which in turn forwarded the funds to the Council. For universities to access these funds they had to follow the academic and regulatory standards established by the Council and it was through this funding mechanism that the Council could assert its authority. To develop their standards, the Council cooperated with and learned from experts and institutions in higher education around the world, and also referred to the experience of Birzeit.

Outside the framework of the Council, Palestinian universities continued to raise funds from non-governmental organizations and private individuals. These relations also helped recruit foreign and Palestinian professors working abroad and Birzeit University in particular employed a large number of professors with international experience.

Although universities created a semi-governmental body for HEIs in Palestine to compensate for the absence of a Palestinian state and to help them in supporting and fund their programs, this did not mean that Birzeit and other universities relied exclusively on this body to generate funds. In this aspect Birzeit conforms to the pattern identified in the literature about the need for organizations (including academic organizations) to diversify their resources and not to rely on limited sources of income (Gornitzak 1999, Gumport 2000, Oliver 1991).

### *Restrictions on resources*

Israeli authorities tried to restrict the flow of professors and funding coming from abroad to Birzeit and other Palestinian universities, and Birzeit informants mentioned a range of such strategies during their interviews. One strategy was to attempt to convince funding agencies and academic organizations that Birzeit and other Palestinian universities delivered education of very low quality. When this approach failed, universities were charged with being ‘anti-Israeli’. The response of Birzeit, as one of its leaders articulated it: “We said to them [the Israeli authorities] that we had not heard that a university was established to be anti-Israeli something or anti-whatever. We are for Palestinian education. If you see that teaching Palestinians is something which is anti-Israeli, it is your problem, not ours. It is not our aim anyway. We want to improve our people. We want our people to come to academic, scientific and cultural levels equal to yours, so that we can live together equally if our destiny is to live in the same area, either in one state or two states”. These Israeli efforts did not succeed in preventing international and regional support to Birzeit and other Palestinian universities (Roberts et.al. 1984; WUS 1990). Not only did the university manage to survive in an environment characterized by the absence of a state, but, equally important, it did so while working against the forces of an established state (Israel), which was explicitly hostile to the higher education sector in Palestine. In 1980, the Israeli government decided that foreign staff working for Palestinian universities should have a clause in their contract stating that they would not participate in or support any ‘Palestinian national activities’. These activities were not

clearly specified, and were generally labeled ‘anti-Israeli’ or ‘terrorist’ activities. “It was seen by us a way to restrict our ability to bring experts and professors from abroad and to stop our progress”, one of Birzeit leaders said.

Birzeit and other universities took a unified, strong position against this decision, with strong support from international academic and human rights organizations. In the end, the decision was never imposed. Once gain, Birzeit had mobilized their institutional values and organizational mission in their reaction towards external pressures. This position of Birzeit and other universities also illustrates Olsen’s (2007) point about the ‘unity of action’ for institutions working in the same field to guard their interests and values. In the case of universities, academics play the role of guardians of the core values of the university as an institution (Clark 1971, 1983). There is further an additional aspect which may be relevant here. In this case, the State that attempts to regulate the HE sector (Israel), is not itself recognized – i.e. has no credibility – amongst HEIs in Palestine. The literature talks about the need for universities of being seen as a legitimate actor/players but it takes for granted the legitimacy enjoyed by the state and its capacity to regulate the sector (Gornitzka 1999; Maassen & Cloete 2002, de Boer & Goedegebuure 2003; Enders & Fulton. 2002). On the other side, the state also needs legitimacy in order to rule/regulate in society, this links to the notion of ‘strong’ vs. ‘weak’ state (Clark 1983). In this case, no one is calling Israel weak as such, but it is weak in its ability to regulate a sector outside its jurisprudence. It also talks about the strength of Birzeit in ignoring the regulations imposed. This tactic is used by organizations which enjoy a strong organizational character (Oliver 1991).

### *University expansion*

Next, Israeli authorities attempted to restrict Birzeit from expanding its campus by denying them the necessary building permits. A leader of Birzeit said: “We wanted to build a new campus and expand our faculties, programs and the number of students. Our plan was to build this campus in the nearby larger town, Ramallah. We

got the necessary funds to buy land for this purpose. The Israelis refused us permission to build. Then we moved our plan and decided to build the new campus on land already owned by the university, not far from where the first campus was located. Israeli authorities tried their best to delay our work and our plans, and it took us two years to get the permit to start building the new campus. Rich individuals from Palestine working outside and from the region donated money to build the campus with its faculties”.

We can see here that ‘resources’ act as counterforce to ‘regulations’ or impositions. The good status, reputation and legitimacy that Birzeit developed through its history had an effect on attracting more resources, illustrating Gornitzka’s (1999) point that universities with strong organizational identity have higher chances of generating a variety of resources and choosing between them.

Birzeit continued its progress, and opened more programs and faculties. In addition to the faculties of arts and sciences, new faculties in engineering and economics were founded. The fact that Birzeit kept attracting the best high school graduates and that it had a very committed and loyal team of professors offered a unique environment and opportunity for high quality of teaching and learning achievements. One of Birzeit leaders elaborated on this, saying: “Our professors who came from Palestine and abroad were very interested in teaching and offering the students the best of what they had. They were full time professors and teaching at Birzeit was their only job and interest. If you add to this the fact that these professors had the best students who were so interested in learning, and the academic and social values the university has, you can imagine how enjoyable and productive the work environment was for both the professors and the students”. This is similar to the model followed by Oxford, Cambridge and Princeton, placing students at the centre and giving emphasis to the importance of teacher-student relations, and also resonates with Humboldt’s idea to educate the full individual (Anderson 2004).

At the organizational level, Birzeit kept their eyes on how leading universities in the region were performing, such as Al-Yarmouk University in Jordan and the American

University in Beirut (AUB). In addition, they continued exchanging experiences with universities in the United States and Europe. In 1979 and later in 1986, Birzeit conducted comprehensive revisions of its regulations in the light of regional and global developments in higher education. “While we were growing we kept developing our regulations, organizational structure, and evaluation mechanisms according to what we learned from our own experience, from one side, and following the updated changes in the leading universities in our region and the world, from the other side”, a University leader said. As discussed in the literature review, for universities to survive they need to look at multiple environments and resources including local, regional, global (Gumport 2000, Gornitzka 1999), and Birzeit in this respect is no exception.

The continuous improvement of Birzeit was a key element for its sustained success. This can be linked with what Clark (1998) writes about (entrepreneurial) universities. For universities to service and prosper, they need to continuously improve their resources and regulations and keep up to date with global developments in these two areas. The above findings further support the existing (institutional) literature which claims that while local communities and countries vary with respect to resources and traditions, universities nevertheless are more similar with respect to their regulations and structural arrangements (Frank & Gabler 2006; Meyer et. al. 2007; Krüecken & Meier 2006). For example, studies by Maassen & Cloete (2002) reveal that, in many countries, teaching arrangements continue to reflect wider world patterns, emphasizing the notion of the universality of universities.

We can further link this to the idea of the university as an ‘institution’ explained in the theoretical basis of the thesis. If certain rules or forms are established over time, and emulated by many, they become the dominant template. Although the experience of an organization throughout the years plays a role in setting this template, organizations learn from each other and follow established successful models which have a significant effect in shaping the dominant university template (Olsen 2007).

One element that may be worth mentioning here is that the template being copied (by Birzeit and others) is of leading research universities, but many (like Birzeit) are not involved in research as such, which makes this copying even more interesting. Meyer et. al. (2007), Powell & DiMaggio (1991) and Scott (2004) found that organizations (including universities) copy the successful models because they are perceived as successful, independently of their unique contextual characteristics.

In an attempt to increase its relations with the Palestinian society as well as the outside world, Birzeit founded friends' societies of the University not only in Palestine but also in the Britain and the United States, and experienced increasing success in identifying donors for its programs and buildings. As a result, Birzeit could also increase the salaries of its staff: "In early 1980s our salaries came to be equal and sometimes exceed the salaries of Israeli universities. Of course, it was not higher than the American universities where some of our professors used to work. However, as one of these professors once said to me, it is true that his salary in the American university where he used to work was at least three times more than what he was being paid here, but he could still save more here than there due to the low life expenses in Palestine", a Birzeit leader said.

Many of the interviewed professors pointed out that the loyalty to Birzeit was not due to financial incentives, but rather to its academic and social freedom, its democratic values, and its unique pioneering position as a leader of higher education under occupation. As an example, in 1986 the University was informed by one of its donors that funding would be decreased. When the university informed its professors of the development, they agreed to give up 15% of their salaries to the university to cover the deficit in its budget. "This could only happen because of the internal transparency and the mutual loyalty between the university and its team and family. Once the university got a fund which filled the gap in its budget, it returned to its professors the money they had contributed", a University professor commented.

The role of the loyalty of the staff in relation to the survival power of the university has been emphasized in the literature by Clark (1972). He found that when a

university faces difficult and extreme challenges, the loyalty of its actors can prevent it from collapsing or disappearing. The values embedded among them through a shared history of struggle and achievements buffer it from the changes and challenges in its external environment and make it immune from external threats (Clark 1971, 1972, 1983; Maassen 2003).

### **3.4.2 Survival despite Closure: 1988-1992**

In 1987, Israeli authorities issued a military order to close Birzeit campuses and the other Palestinian universities. The closure lasted for four years. Higher education was banned in Palestine. This section will explore two main developments: (i) The closure of Birzeit; and (ii) its survival strategy.

#### *The closure of Birzeit*

In January 1988, a month after the start of the first Palestinian popular uprising (*intifada*) against the Israeli occupation, Israeli authorities decided to close Birzeit University along with all other Palestinian universities. This was not a completely new experience for Birzeit, as the University had been closed down on previous occasions for periods of several weeks or a few months. However, this time the closure was to last for four years and three months. During previous closures, the length of the closure was set up front and did not exceed six months, allowing Birzeit to reschedule its semesters, exams and lectures. This time, no one knew how long it would last or how many times the order would be renewed. “The challenge was significant and the University went into a survival battle”, a Birzeit leader said. The campuses were closed and professors and students had no access to the university facilities.



### *The survival strategy*

The University continued to operate underground with small study groups in makeshift arrangements outside the campus, and a variety of people, schools and organizations offered their facilities to Birzeit students and professors. These efforts were strongly resisted by the Israeli authorities. On 19 April 1989, the Israeli newspaper *The Jerusalem Post* reported that the Israeli police had “uncovered a network of illegal classes held by West Bank universities at private high schools in East Jerusalem.” Five days later, the Israeli Army raided the YMCA building in Ramallah, which housed the departmental offices of Birzeit University during the closure. A warning was delivered to the University administration by the Israeli occupation authorities, stating that “under no circumstances can you teach, in houses or anywhere else. If we find anyone teaching or any students carrying books we will take appropriate measures against them” (Bargouthi & Murray 2006, p.34). In spite of this, the University administration was adamant that it should continue its operation. In the words of a University leader; “This did not stop us, we always found alternative places. The Birzeit team, professors, students and the community showed a commitment to the survival of Birzeit that we always remember and feel very proud of”.

However, Birzeit knew that although they had found alternative solutions, the new situation could not fully compensate for the quality of its campuses, and the University worried about the effect of this on the quality of its educational programs. As a solution, Birzeit decided to reduce the number of credit hours available to students each semester. This meant that students spent two or three semesters to complete what they had previously covered in one semester, which in turned meant that many students graduated late. Professors had to work extra hours to ensure that the teaching process could proceed at the same level of quality.

The insistence and commitment of its team and students to continue operation got the attention and admiration of different universities and organizations interested in

education. As a result, the University could get funds and donations from abroad to help it to survive. This made it possible for the University to offer financial support to its students and to pay salaries and rental costs.

Although the University kept recruiting new students, it still refused to compromise its admission recruitments. The goal of being an institution for academic elitism and social democracy survived. The informants who were at Birzeit during this time feel very proud of contributing to this success, and of being part of Birzeit's history during this crucial period. As one of these professors said, "When I look back at those days, I feel happy and proud of our success. We, professors, administrators and students, were a very close family. We worked day and night, we always encouraged each other. This shared history is unforgettable. We always make sure to deliver this history and its lessons to the new generation, to the new professors and students. We turned the Israeli attempt to destroy us to a source of more empowerment. Once the University was reopened, we were as a team very much stronger than before. In brief, remembering those days always encouraged and inspired us to participate in more achievements for this University, no matter what the difficulties are".

Birzeit's behavior during the closure of its campus can be explained through the theories of Clark (1972). Once the university has a strong identity (saga), it enjoys a determination and unity among its actors around its mission. This powerful organizational character of a given university enables it to find alternatives in order to survive without losing its own identity, not only through finding other locations but also other resources (Gornitzka 1999).

### **3.4.3 Development under New Circumstances: 1992-2000**

In 1992, after fifty-one months of closure, Birzeit and other Palestinian universities were reopened following peace negotiations between PLO and Israel. The exiled Birzeit President was also allowed to return, for the first time since 1975. Birzeit University was again determined to improve its capacities as an HEI.

This section will look at the main developments that took place following the return to campus. Three key aspects are covered, namely: challenges in funding and the development of new resources; (ii) the introduction of a master level program; and (iii) the effect of the University saga.

### *Challenges in funding and the development of new resources*

After the Gulf War in the early 1990s, financial support to Birzeit from the wealthy Gulf countries significantly decreased, and Birzeit once again had to look for alternative resources. Due to its strong international relations and good reputation, Birzeit could compensate for this shortage by obtaining funding from the European Union. Wealthy Palestinians living in Europe and the United States also increased their support to the University. Finally, PA covered 10% of the universities' budgets.

In spite of these new funding sources, Birzeit recognized that it also had to generate funds internally. At that time Palestinian society, which had finally been given limited self-autonomy, was ambitiously looking forward to developing its social and economic situation. As a response to the new geo-political and social situations, Birzeit established community research and consultancy centers, conducting research in areas such as health, environment, industry, feasibility studies and water and offering a range of consultancy services. Additionally, it improved its continuing education center and committed alumni also increased their donations in support of the University. In this development, Birzeit had been inspired, like many other universities around the world, by models found among some European and American universities which had expanded its work outside the campus and established community research centers (Clark 1998; McGuinness 2004; Gumport 2000). Again, we see an example which illustrates that universities tend to imitate each other and follow the role model universities (Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Meyer et. al 2007).

It could be argued here that the environment does impact Birzeit University, despite its apparent resistance and survival independent of external circumstances indicated

earlier. This goes with the idea of universities as 'open systems'. They respond and affect their various environments (Olsen 2005, 2007). At the same, as (Clark 1983) noticed, universities are seen as connected to their values and beliefs built among its actors (Clark 1983). To combine these two findings, we could say that the university uses its values not only to buffer it from external changes but also to bridge it with others. Academic values and beliefs filter the suggested changes. If these changes fit with the university's mission and identity, they are accepted. Otherwise, the university rejects them (Clark 1983, 198; Gumport 2000; Meyer et. al 2007). However, the capability of a given organization (like the university) to be selective in accepting or rejecting changes highly depends on the strength of its organizational character and the diversity of its resources (Gornitzka 1999; Oliver 1997; Scott 2004). Recourse dependency theorists connect between the level of the autonomy that organizations can have and their recourse (in-) dependencies (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978). In their attempt to find other resources, universities tend to improve their public relations and widen and deepen portfolio of third-stream income. They exhibit a growth of professionalized outreach offices that work on knowledge transfer, industrial contact and continuing education (Clark 1998; Eicher & Chevaillier 2002; Gumport 2000; Jongbloed & van der Knoop 1999).

As other such examples of outreach and diversification, Birzeit professors assisted the newly established PA in establishing, organizing and developing its various Ministries. For example, the first minister of higher education and the head and founder of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics were both former Birzeit professors. Businessmen from Palestine living overseas felt encouraged to invest in Palestine due to the more stable political situation, and referred to Birzeit centers for feasibility studies and consultancies. Birzeit University and other universities also provided the new private and public sector with an educated work force. Its competent graduates competed successfully for the new job opportunities and were well received by employers.

### *Introducing master programs*

Thanks to the renewed financial support, the University could establish a graduate school in 1996. With this development, Birzeit was no longer just a teaching institution. Most of the master programs were designed based on feedback from the community research centers. This is an interesting development as it indicates that the periphery (in this case, the community research centers)– which is more innovative and quick to react - can actually produce innovations which are then adopted to the rest of the University - the academic core (in this case, the graduate degree structure). This takes us back again to Olsen's (2005, 2007) argument that although universities have sometimes been accused of being rigid institutions, universities are in fact “open-system” institutions which respond to external changes and needs.

Through their work in the field, these research centers learned about the emerging developmental needs in the society, and master programs were developed to address these needs, including programs in applied chemistry, applied statistics, gender law and development, democracy and human rights, urban planning and environmental engineering.

We should also consider why Birzeit created a graduate (master) program rather than a bachelor one or short courses. One of the Birzeit deans explained it like this: “We have developed the bachelor programs and curriculums to fit with the needs and changes that we noticed in the local society and the world. We also have courses and organize workshops and conferences about these needs and changes. However, we also wanted to include more research oriented programs and activities in our University. As holders of knowledge, universities cannot only focus on delivering knowledge (teaching), they have to contribute in producing it, too, through research programs.” Here, we could also suggest another instance of institutional isomorphism (Powell & DiMaggio 1991), as Birzeit continued to model top level universities that were leading research institutions in their field to improve their status and the quality of their work.

Due to its increasing interest in research, Birzeit encouraged its faculty to publish more research in order to get promoted, but without allowing research to come at the expense of the quality of teaching. Many research and teaching assistants were appointed, and Birzeit staff, faculty and students participated actively in training and professional development programs, scholarships, conferences and workshops held in the US and Europe. Finally, Birzeit continued its focus on strengthening its library resources and developed its technological facilities in cooperation with leading international research universities. IT support units were established to provide updated technologies in internet and software programs.

Thus, during this period Birzeit was blooming and experienced significant progress. It organized successful international and regional conferences in education and research. It hosted famous researchers and visiting professors from the biggest universities in the world. In short, Birzeit turned to be a reference (role model) for other universities, not only in Palestine but also in the region.

### *The Birzeit saga*

The fact that the team of Birzeit, including its founders and leaders, faculty and administrators and students, struggled together and succeeded to keep the University alive in the face of all pressures developed a strong sense of pride and loyalty to the University. For example, their experience of teaching underground and their ability to keep operating the University during the closure made Birzeit a heroic icon in the field of higher education in the eyes of its team, society and the world of academia. This shared history produced an organizational saga and shared identity, norms and culture among the Birzeit family. As it was mentioned in the literature review, organizational saga is a collective understanding of unique achievements and strong normative bonds developed among a normally established group of people, based on the historical development and heroic exploits of their organization. With the development of belief, this history becomes a definition full of pride and identity for

the group and turns their place of work into a beloved institution to which they are devoted (Clark 1972).

Those who have worked together for years (like many of the Birzeit team members) will develop shared feelings about their organization and a set of beliefs to define the identity of their place in life. This set of beliefs gives meaning to the fact that they have contributed so much time and effort to their university (Clark 1971, 1983; Hatch 1993; Maassen 1996; Pettigrew 1979)

However, this saga and confidence did not prevent Birzeit from adapting itself to changes in society and HEIs in the world. Instead, it has offered it the power to choose which changes it wants adopt, accepting some and refusing others. On the other hand, universities which allow themselves to be caught up in a strong saga in away that makes them become rigid towards any change face difficulties to survive, just like universities with a weak organizational character (Gornitzka 1999, Meyer et al. 2007; Clark 1971, 1972).

### **3.4.4 Growth in spite of a New Siege: 2000 – Present**

From 2000 onwards, Birzeit University was yet again put to the test as the roads to the university were blocked and professors and students had to struggle in order to reach the campus (Right to Education 2009). However, Birzeit leaders decided that they would not only work for the university to survive but also to continue enhancing its prosperity.

In this section, the following events and elements are covered: Access to University is denied again; growth despite the siege: admission policy; and the organizational structure of Birzeit. We will also discuss the quality assurance and motivation policies at Birzeit.

### *Access to the University is denied again*

“At the end of 2000, after the failure of negotiations between PLO and Israel about putting a complete end of the occupation and develop Palestinian autonomy into a separate State, the second Palestinian uprising, the second *intifada*, started. Israeli authorities decided to block the roads between Palestinian towns. Birzeit staff and students were unable to go to the campus. In 2001, the Israeli army blocked the roads to Birzeit University, preventing students and professors from going to their classes”, a Birzeit leader said.

Birzeit professors and students decided to challenge these actions. Immediately, Birzeit started an intensive campaign to remove the road blocks and the Israeli military forces from the area surrounding the university. Demonstrations were organized; lectures given next to the military checkpoints; and an international campaign was launched for the right of Palestinians to education.

A professor and leader at the University remember how the administrative and academic staff members who could reach the university worked to keep the campus open and active: “There were a few numbers of our professors and administrators living close to the campus. They volunteered to work extra hours, cooperated together to keep the university in contact with its students, professors and the world...Thanks to the commitment of our team and our electronic system and internet portal we could send study materials to students who could not come to the campus. We could keep in touch with our professors who in their turn kept in contact with their students. Even registration in new courses continued. Again, the commitment of Birzeit people helped the university to keep overcoming the challenges that pops in its face”.

In 2003, Israeli government decided to remove its forces from the roads to Birzeit. However, the Israeli military checkpoints and road blocks around the region of Ramallah, where Birzeit town is located, and between different regions in West Bank continued. Students and professors traveling from other areas had to wait for long



hours until they could pass these road blocks, and were harassed and treated badly at checkpoints (Right to Education 2009). In response, many of them chose to live close to the University, to avoid missing their lectures.

### *Growth despite the siege*

In the past, when Israeli authorities had closed the University campus (1987-1992), Birzeit adopted a survival strategy. However, this time Birzeit decided to face the siege with a survival-developmental strategy. In addition to continuing its current programs and activities, Birzeit established new faculties in the areas of law, public administration, and information technology. It also started to build a nursing faculty. Birzeit is also currently planning to enlarge the department of education and turn it to a separate faculty.

The University community research centers had identified local teams and partners in different regions working with the research staff at the University. The position of Vice President for Community Outreach was created to follow up the progress of these centers. The library was expanded, and the IT support unit was improved. More computer labs were opened and wireless connection was made available throughout the campus. E-learning techniques were further developed, and grades, lectures and instructions were made accessible to students and professors through the university portal.

It could be argued here that because there are many academic organizations in Palestine, the size of universities does matter. In other words, in order to remain among the leading universities in Palestine, Birzeit expanded its size. This competition between universities has been emphasized by Maassen & Olsen (2007) and Clark (1998) as one of the main factors which affects universities' development plans. However, as one of Birzeit pleaders said "Birzeit was always aware of any possible effect that expansion could have on our values and the careful attention we pay to our students. We do not open a new program or center before making in-depth

feasibility studies, discussing, reviewing and voting on it in our councils and guaranteeing that we have all needed human resources including the academic and administrative staff, technological, curriculum and financial resources”

Therefore, we again see that Birzeit strikes a balance between change and stability, being conservative and flexible at the same time and carefully moving along a ‘change vs. flexibility’ continuum, illustrating the main survival factor of the university where its values buffer and bridge it to external changes (Clark 1983).

### *Funding*

“Currently, the University community research centers cover 30% of the University budget. In spite of the siege they have continued their activities and even expanded to cover new areas in health, industry, education and other development sectors. Student tuition fees cover 30% of the budget. Students with high grades and students with financial difficulties are exempted from paying the fees. PA covers up to 10% of the university budget”, a Birzeit leader said when explaining the University’s funding base. In addition to these resources, Birzeit could maintain and improve its strong local and international relations due to its academic success, good reputation and financial transparency, as well as its powerful alumni and friends’ societies. Significant donations were sent to Birzeit from Palestinian donors working abroad and in Palestine; many of them Birzeit alumni.

Birzeit has continued its conservative policy regarding funds offered with conditionalities, and the number of programs and accepted students. Birzeit still refuses to receive or to ask for funds given under conditions that contradict the objectives of funding proposals, or its general goals and mission. The University justifies this policy by stating that it prevents external interference and protects its autonomy and mission, and therefore uses its values as a ‘buffering mechanism’ to protect the University from external interferences (Clark 1983).

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This attitude can also be interpreted in light of theory of institutionalism and resource dependency discussed in the first two chapters. Once regulations are institutionalized in an organization through its history and specific shared norms and values are developed among its actors, it is not easy to introduce changes that contradict these principles (Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Scott 2001; Meyer and Rowan 1977). We can further argue that the organizational character and identity of Birzeit can be viewed as sufficiently strong for the University to be capable of resisting changes which do not fit with its actors' values and culture, and that it has been successful in generating and choosing between different funding sources (Gornitzka 1999; Gumpert 2000; Clark 1983, 1998; Meyer et. al. 2007).

With regard to transparency and auditing, Birzeit remained very careful and strict. Internal and external auditors were appointed by the University, and Birzeit consistently reported to donors how their grants had been spent and invited their representatives to observe for themselves progress on the ground. Birzeit strongly believes that transparency has a great effect on the creditability and reputation of a university towards its community, students and donors, and considers this as one of the important keys for its success. To guarantee the success of the University and to ensure continued donor support, strong auditing and transparency mechanisms have been put in place, to ensure that expenditures comply with the budgets and objectives that have been approved in funding proposals. Every year, departments send their budget proposals, including the facilities and finances requested, to the Vice President for Financial and Administrative Affairs through the faculty dean and council. Auditors monitor expenses to ensure that the funds are spent according to the approved budgets. This reflects Gumpert (2000) and McGuinness (2004), who have argued that for universities to survive, they need to focus on both resources as well as resource-relationships. From this perspective, the management of resources, their accumulation and internal allocation, and the management of resource relationships between the organization and its environment all are seen as major factors to guarantee survival for universities. Gumpert also relates transparency closely to 'accountability' and 'credibility', associated with the public legitimacy (image) of the institution. A public image of credibility and legitimacy will help attract funds, with

internal transparency and increased funding converging in a positive looping-mechanism.

### *Admission Policy*

In terms of expanding the number of students and programs, Birzeit remains conservative. Today, the University has 8500 students enrolled in forty eight undergraduate programs and twenty three master programs. One of the Birzeit leaders explained it this way: “It might be argued that it is a big achievement that we could come to this number of programs in spite of the obstacles put in our way by the Israeli occupation. On the other side, it could also be argued that we could offer even more programs. In any case, the most important element for us is not the number, it is the quality. Opening PhD programs or a faculty of medicine for example or accepting more students without making sure that we have enough financial and human resources for its success and continuity will be very destructive to our resources and reputation. There is a trend in the funding policy of the MoHE to connect the amount of funds to universities with the number of students. We think the funds should be directed to develop enough human resources and facilities to be able to have more students”.

One might respond to this by saying that given the strong focus on expansion in current higher education policy, size remains a core concern. At one stage, Birzeit – like many universities – realized that in order to survive in an increasingly competitive environment, size does matter – this is the rationale for mergers in HEIs (de Boer & Goedegebuure 2003; Minzberg 2004). However, in this case it might be also said that Birzeit was responding to the increasing demand for higher education in Palestine (UNESCO 2007). Alternatively, referring to Olsen (2005) and Clark (1983), we could also say that the Birzeit University leaders in general have relaxed their policy of excellence as to balance it more with the policy of social equity – access for more students.

On the other hand, the empirical data in this case shows that Birzeit is quite resilient to outside pressures and influences. Even in a situation where a legitimate state authority is in charge (MoHE) –things do not seem to have changed much in terms of the admission policy of Birzeit. This may indicate two things: first, Birzeit can afford to do so, due to their resource independencies, and/or second, the university is so strongly institutionalized that change becomes problematic. Finally, resistance to change may also increase as the university matures.

Oliver (1997) explains such behavior by referring it to the role that culture (norms, values) and saga play. In her opinion, academics form ‘clans/tribes’ with specific cultures and beliefs that can hardly be broken from the outside, especially when the university enjoys a strong character as an organization. These beliefs and cultures shape the organizational identity and saga which buffer it from changes which contradict with its internal goals and mission (Clark 1971, 1972, 1983; Maassen 2003).

In addition to the shared history of struggle and achievements among academics of Birzeit, which have created a strong organizational saga, the small size of Birzeit has also contributed significantly to strengthening this saga. Birzeit has always been a small organization, making staff and faculty close to each other. It started with around 270 students in 1972 and presently has around 8500. Many universities in Palestine which were established after Birzeit have exceeded this number. This supports Clark’s claim that universities of smaller sizes are more likely to possess stronger organizational identities (Clark 1972, 1983). It has also been argued that universities with a strong organizational character prefer to be small and excellent, rather than expanding and risking their high ranked position (Watts 2007). This links to the idea of elite vs. mass institutions. Despite their commitment to social development, in this case the organization is more interested in protecting its ethos (prestige) than in advancing an equity agenda (Trow 1970). Birzeit leaders’ response to this is that faculties do not have the capacity to accept all students applying to join it; therefore they choose the most highly scored students. On the other side, one of the faculty deans said: “if we have enough resources maybe it would be better and fairer

to conduct interviews with prospective students and not only relying on their high school grades”. The University leaders insisted that equity does not mean to accept students even if they do not meet the requirements for the programs they intend to join.

### *The Organizational Structure of Birzeit*

As will be clear by now, Birzeit has intentionally developed an organizational structure based on the values of democracy, academic freedom, and transparency. Within its structure, Birzeit established department councils, consisting of all professors of each department. Heads of these department councils are members in the faculty council, in addition to two elected teachers from the faculty and two students with strong academic records. Deans of faculties and the University presidential team form the university council. The presidential team includes the president and the vice presidents. There are vice presidents for financial and administrative affairs, and for academic affairs. Recently, the post of vice president for community outreach was also established. The administrative units at the university consist of the units of planning and development, admission and registration, human resources, finance, quality assurance, public relation, students' affairs and the internal auditing.

The department, faculty and university council run the daily affairs of the university, while the board of trustees guides the overall university mission and goals. It is also responsible for constitutional affairs and assists in generating funds and support to university. The board of trustees appoints the university president and the internal auditor. The role of the internal auditor is to help the president ensure that financial, admission, and employment decisions are taken according to the policies adopted by the board of trustees. There is also an external auditor, who is usually selected from among the best five auditing companies in the world and approved by the university donors.

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The head of the department is chosen from the department professors. He or she is nominated by the dean of the faculty and his/hers appointment is approved by the president and the university council. He/she can remain in the position for two years, renewable once and in a few cases for a second time. The same period of office applies to faculty deans. The faculty dean is chosen from among the heads of departments and appointed by the President and the university council. This is also the case for the vice presidents and the heads of administrative units, their appointments decided upon and approved by the president and the university council. The vice president for financial and administrative affairs and the heads of admission and registration, public relations, student affairs, planning and developments, quality assurance are academics are all selected among professors at the university.

The departments and faculties are responsible of their own programs, and make decisions about the courses, curriculums and requirements for students and professors. They take their decisions by voting. If a department wants to propose a new program, it has to be approved first by the faculty where the department is located, and subsequently by the university council.

All professors and other university staff members are organized in a labor, whose leadership is elected on a yearly basis. The union engages directly with the Birzeit leadership on decisions taken by the university. Many professors believe that the democratic environment and transparency developed through the years have strengthened the relationship between them and their place of work.

In the organizational structure of Birzeit, academics are strongly represented and involved in the administrative activities and decisions at the University. A University leader emphasized this as an explicit policy: “Due to our growth, we had to increase our focus on administrative work. However, we kept this in the hands of academics. We ask professors to give part of their time to administrative work. For example, the heads of units like admission, public relation, students’ affairs, planning and development and the vice president of financial affairs are professors appointed for a specific period of time, two to four years. During their administrative work they still

have a few hours for teaching or research. Then they are replaced by other professors and they go back to their work as full time professors. We believe that it is only the academics and academic values that can best run the university". Professors who are appointed in senior administrative positions have training in management and administration in addition to their core academic expertise, and are supported by assistants who are professional administrators rather than academics.

We referred above in chapter two to the influence of New Public Management and its impact on the working arrangements and structure of universities. The need for increased resources frequently lead organizations to improve efficiency by adopting new methods of work, and many universities have therefore employed an increasing number of professional administrators (as opposed to academics) who are given more power than before (Maassen 2003). However, at Birzeit a mixed approach appears to have been adopted: "Due to the growth of our work we have increased our administrative budget and staff", a University leader explained. "We periodically organize advanced training courses for our administrative staff and send them on scholarships abroad to update their professional administrative skills. Most of our academic staff members are not academics but their leaders, the senior administrators, should be academics with a strong background in management. By doing this we make sure that our university is functioning as an academic organization, not as business firm. In this way, we guarantee that the university is managed according to our academic values, academic freedom, democracy and autonomy, the value of knowledge as the substance for the university, and the university's image, identity and mission as a place for academic elitism and social democracy".

Academics at Birzeit were rather resistant towards relinquishing control to administrators or outside sources. This need to remain in charge of developments by devising structural arrangements accordingly is highlighted in the literature by Birnbaum (1999), Gornitzka (1999) and Gumport (2000). These authors have found that, in order for academics to make sure that decisions and changes adopted in a given university are in line with their values and beliefs, it is necessary for them to be



present at the managerial level and in decision making process. The best administrative arrangements a university can have is arguably those that involve academics, and where managerial values are reconciled with the academic ones (Clark 1998). In the organizational structure of Birzeit, we notice that the University has developed an organizational structure taking into consideration the autonomous nature of departments and the fact that universities are bottom heavy organizations. Democratic participation and sharing in decision making processes are guaranteed to all. It could be said that the university here is following (copying) the traditional model of university. We could also relate this to Olsen (2007), where the University can be seen as a rule-governed ‘community of scholars’ or a ‘representative democracy’ or a blending of both, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter four of this paper. In general, we can say that the democratic decision making /collegial model has been a core characteristic of academic systems. In other words, it has become culturally embedded in the idea (or ideal) of the University. On this point, Clark (1983) has emphasized the centrality of knowledge as one of the main reasons why academics in different disciplines and departments have to continue being involved in decision making processes.

The fragmented nature of the university, characterized by semi-autonomous and interdependent units and departments that are loosely coupled together, was discussed in chapter two of this paper (Clark 1983; Birnbaum 1989; Scott 2001; Jongbloed & van der Knoop 1999; Weick 1979; Birnbaum 1989; Dill 2000). Because decision-making power in universities is spread across a large number of units and actors, the university appears as a kind of ‘federal system’ with a bottom heavy division of labor, including autonomous departments and schools, chairs and faculties (van Vught & Maassen 2002; Minzberg 2004; Maassen & Olsen 2007). However, as all academics are allowed to have a say, the potential for conflict and inefficient, drawn out decision making processes also increases, necessitating a careful management of the interplay between formalisation (roles, regulations, structure) and informal arrangements (democracy, values, etc.). According to a Birzeit leader, the University has emphasised the significance of the agreed upon norms and values to minimise conflicts between internal stakeholders and to facilitate a constructive interaction

between these two dimensions. This is in line with research which has shown that in order to reduce uncertainty and conflict, universities tend to increase clarity and agreement about behavioral rules, including allocation of formal authority and standardization and formalization of practice (Olsen 2007).

### *Quality assurance*

Since its establishment as a college, Birzeit has been monitoring the achievements of its graduates in the job market as well as in the universities they attended to pursue graduate studies, and paid attention to feedback they received to their programs. Positive aspects were reinforced and points for improvement were actively addressed. At the internal level, Birzeit has over the years developed an evaluation mechanism of its professors' work, involving different levels of evaluation and feedback.

Each professor first conducts a self-assessment, and is also evaluated by his/her students and the head of the department. These evaluations are sent then to the dean of the faculty and the vice president for academic affairs for comments. Next, all evaluations, including the comments, are sent back to the professor who reviews them and adds his/her final comments and conclusion. The head of the department, the faculty dean and the vice president for academic affairs then read the conclusions and comments from the professor, and decide on the final evaluation, including rewards or reprimands, for that professor in the given academic year. If the professor does not agree with the final evaluation, he/she can appeal to faculty council first and later to the university council, which takes their decisions by voting.

Recently, Birzeit established a quality assurance unit (QAU), which is tasked with developing and coordinating the quality assurance methods and evaluation techniques of the departments. The QAU is placed under the authority of the Director of the Office of Planning and Development, and has completed internal evaluations of fourteen programs in humanities and social sciences, and nine programs in engineering and information systems (Birzeit, 2009).

Quality has always been a significant element that Birzeit has paid careful attention to. However, it could be said that by founding a separate unit to deal with quality assurance issues, the University was again imitating other universities. It could also be argued that having this unit as part of the central administration, means increasing centralization, echoing Clark's (1983, 1988) findings in Europe of a strong steering core in the higher education sector.

Many HEIs have established such units since pressure increased on them, starting in the 1990s, to prove to the government and taxpayers increased efficiency as well as the educational contribution towards the market and society in general (Dill 2000; Stensaker 2007). However, this does not mean that academics and universities have agreed to apply market standards on their work and objectives. In many universities around the world (including Birzeit), academics with their values are present in these units (Westerheijden et. al. 2007).

### *Motivation policies*

Many of Birzeit professors and employees are still highly committed to the University and consider it their home and family. Many of these employees and professors experienced one or two developmental stages of Birzeit University. Others were students who went abroad for graduate studies and later came back to teach at the University. However, some teachers, especially among those who do not belong to these two categories, have left to take up employment elsewhere in search of better salaries.

Birzeit paid attention to this and developed a plan to deal with this challenge. It activated a part time contract modality where such professors can still work at the university in addition to their work with other organizations. It decided to intensify the policy of sending its best graduates for advanced studies, to then become professors at the university. The University developed a health package insurance which competes with health insurance offered by most organizations. It also

supported the employees' housing association, and offered free tuition for the sons and daughters of its employees. Through these means, the University devised its rules and regulations to become more attractive to employees, an element emphasized by Gornitzka (2007), Maassen & Olsen (2007) and Olsen (2007). They have pointed out that formalization and re-formalization of activities is done by universities to meet external challenges, usually made in such a way as to strengthen already existing norms which are seen by the university and its actors as part of its identity.

While these motivations have been effective, the most attractive element of Birzeit is its liberal and democratic work environment. "Birzeit has always proved itself as the leading institution in Palestine as a place of academic elitism, democracy and social and academic freedom", as one of Birzeit leader said adding: "This was and will always be a key element in our survival and development".

To conclude this chapter, through the case of Birzeit we have several empirical illustrations of the university's survival characteristics. We saw that the University monitored the university-environment interface, determined appropriate strategies (Oliver 1991), and developed effective bridging and buffering mechanisms. Birzeit responded to an external environment which was frequently both uncertain and threatening, but without losing its identity, mission and goals. In this way, change and stability went hand in hand (Gumport 2000; Becher & Kogan 1992; Birnbaum 1989). However, universities respond differently depending on the difference in the power of their individual identities on the organizational level (Weick 1979, 1988; Sporn 1999; Gornitzka 1999). People's depth of belief in the values of the university makes a difference in the way they respond in periods of crisis and increasing external change (Dill 2000), and this was clearly evident in the case of Birzeit.

On the other hand, Oliver (1991, 1997) has argued that the organizational response of a given university, regardless of the strength of its character, will differ according to the type of external change or pressure it faces. This is obvious in the story of Birzeit. For example, it was resistant to actions taken by Israeli authorities who tried to control and limit its abilities and autonomy as an HEI. It was also very strict with

accepting funds that came with political conditions attached, even from Palestinian parties, and with changing its admission requirements and increasing the number of its students as MoHE wanted. On the other side, it was open towards finding other funding resources by creating outreach community research centers, and also developed different study programs based on the needs of society.

After this comprehensive discussion of the implications of Birzeit's survival story, the next chapter will summarize these findings, presenting an overview perspective at the strategies, tactics and visions adopted by Birzeit in order to survive.

## CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The first section of this chapter, offers a summary of the findings explained in the previous chapter. The second section which is the last part of this study will present the conclusions we can learn from this research.

### 4.1 Summary of the Empirical Findings:

In the previous chapter, we discussed comprehensively each stage of Birzeit's development as a university from its inception until present. We analyzed these stages separately in the context of recent research about universities and their survival elements. This section summarizes the results, offering an overview perspective at Birzeit story in the light of available literature. I will mainly refer to the studies made by Oliver (1991) and Olsen (2005).

The value of using these two authors at this stage, given that we already made links with the literature in chapter three, is that Oliver's study will enable us to understand the strategies Birzeit were adopting in response to particular events through a typology she offers of the strategic and tactic responses of the organizations to external pressures. On the other hand, Olsen's study of the different visions the University can have as an institution, both on the internal and external level, can help us to see how Birzeit employed these visions in order to survive.

Oliver (1991) identified *five* strategic responses of organizations to external dynamics/pressures, namely; acquiesce, compromise, avoid, delay and manipulate. She stated that these strategies develop from one strategy to another through the growth of a given organization. The following table shows the tactics used in these strategies, with corresponding examples.

Table 4.1

## Strategic Responses of Organizations to External Dynamics/Pressures

Strategies	Tactics	Examples
Acquiesce	Habit	Following invisible, taken-for-granted norms
	Imitate	Mimicking institutional models
	Comply	Obedying rules and accepting norms
Compromise	Balance	Balancing the expectations of multiple constituents
	Pacify	Placating and accommodating institutional elements
	Bargain	Negotiating with institutional stakeholders
Avoid	Conceal	Disguising nonconformity
	Buffer	Loosening institutional attachments
	Escape	Changing goals, activities, or domains
Defy	Dismiss	Ignoring explicit norms and values
	Challenge	Contesting rules and requirements
	Attack	Assaulting the sources of institutional pressure
Manipulate	Co-opt	Importing influential constituents
	Influence	Shaping values and criteria
	Control	Dominating institutional constituents and processes

Oliver (1991) p. 152

With the first strategy, *acquiesce*, Oliver found that tactics used are habit, imitate or/and comply. Applying this to Birzeit's case, we saw how in its early stage as a college and due to the absence of a higher education system and regulations in the West Bank, Birzeit imitated other universities in the region like AUB (American University of Beirut), taking it as a role model. Another example could be mentioned about the cultural behaviors that can be attributed to 'habit' tactics in the resistance to change, like accepting more students or giving more power to professional administrators.

For the second strategy, *compromise*, Oliver indicates three tactics, balance, pacify and/or bargain. I think what Oliver means by compromise is that the organization makes some changes to its internal operations/structure, so as to accommodate some external dimensions, like creating a new leadership position or unit to handle quality assurance or community relations. In the case of Birzeit we saw how it created a position of vice president for community outreach services, and also established a unit for quality assurance due to the increased focus on this aspect among universities around the world.

By 'balance' Oliver refers to changes that do not contradict entirely with the primary mission and cultural values of the organization and that are accepted by internal stakeholders. If you look, for example, at how Birzeit dealt with the need for more focus on the administrative level and how it reacted to new public management methods, we can see that on the one hand, Birzeit increased its administrative human and financial resources and power, while on the other it kept a strong presence of academics at the managerial level. We noticed that almost all senior administrators are professors with professional, non-academic administrators working with them as assistants.

However, we have to keep in mind that once Birzeit decided to expand from a college to a university, it already had a sense of strong organizational character due to the strong interconnections, norms and values developed among its team members through a shared history of success. This explains why Birzeit was ready to adopt the next two strategic responses to institutional processes mentioned above, avoidance and delay.

Oliver (1991) identified that tactics associated with *avoidance* include to conceal, buffer, and/or escape, and the tactics for the strategy of *delay* as dismiss, challenge, and attack. We saw several examples of these strategies being used by Birzeit. In 1972, when Birzeit decided to start the first, four year university program in Palestine, Israeli authorities tried to prevent this and expelled the University's President. Birzeit refused to halt its program, and its president worked as an ambassador for the University abroad, strengthening its relations with regional and international universities, while his vice president served as an acting president for the university. Later, in 1980, when Israeli authorities decided to impose conditions on foreign professors coming to work at Palestinian universities, Birzeit considered this as a political condition, and therefore as an interference with its academic freedom and autonomy. Along with other Palestinian universities, it succeeded in stopping this decision.



During the next 16 years (1972-1988), Birzeit developed a much stronger organizational identity than before, due to the shared history of struggle and success and the common norms and culture shared by its academics. The University had a saga, a spirit which connects all of its team together and unifies them behind its mission. Therefore, when Israeli military authorities decided to close Birzeit's campus for more than four years, Birzeit decided to oppose this action and worked underground, i.e. operated illegally.

Moreover, we noticed in different stages of Birzeit's history that it was strong enough to resist resource pressures and to exercise choice among the resources offered. For example, when there was an opportunity to obtain funds from international sources under the condition of cooperating with Israeli universities, Birzeit refused to request or accept such funding, stating that "since we do not enjoy the same academic freedom offered to Israeli academics and because we are discriminated by Israeli authorities, we do not want this money no matter where does it come from" (Birzeit University leader). However, Birzeit was sometimes accommodating and balancing between more than one strategy. For example, it adopted a *compromise* strategy regarding the external needs that emerged in Palestine. As shown earlier, starting in 1992, the University opened community research centers offering research and consultancy services to different sectors in society, including industry and social work sector. Moreover, it took what it learned through from its work with society and embedded it in a set of new master programs, like environmental engineering, gender and democracy, applied physics, and advanced IT technologies.

With regard to the strategy of *manipulating*, with its tactics identified by Oliver as co-opt, influence, and control, we can find two examples where Birzeit used this strategy. The first is from a quite early stage in the history of Birzeit University and the other is a very recent development. In 1977 (five years after it started work as a university) and after successfully placing itself as pioneering and leading institution among HEIs in Palestine, Birzeit led the efforts to establish the Palestinian Higher Education Council to compensate for the absence of a nation-state/Ministry of Education. It is interesting to see a university coming to a point that it plays the role

of a nation-state, bearing in mind the anti-Palestinian education policies adopted by the Israeli militant occupation. When one of the University leaders was asked how Birzeit could function without a state, he proudly responded: “We were the State!”

The other example is from the present time. When MoHE (founded in 1994 after the Oslo agreement) recently adopted a policy to connect its funding structures to universities with the objective of increasing the number of students accepted, Birzeit rejected this policy emphasizing that governmental funds should, first and foremost, be directed at developing human and technological resources to meet the increasing social need for more higher education graduates. So, even when a legitimate national power (MoHE) was asking for something which went against what Birzeit’s academics believed in, the University was ready to oppose and protest it. In both cases, the behavior of Birzeit could only have happened because the University felt strong and confident, enjoying a loyal team with a shared history and norms as well as a clear mission. However, we cannot underestimate other elements which empowered the position of Birzeit University. These elements include resource independencies and a well established reputation both across the region and overseas, providing it with legitimacy, influence and authority within the domestic HE establishment called, by Clark (1983), the ‘academic oligarchy’. These factors are of equal, if not more, importance than culture, norms and a sense of togetherness (loyalty).

The above behavior is further explained thoroughly by Olsen (2005) in his study about the institutional dynamics of the (European) University. He found that the University acts as a self governing community of scholars when its actors have shared norms and objectives. Changes in such cases are driven by internal dynamics and autonomy is a constitutive principle of the University as an institution, where the constitutive logic is one of free inquiry and truth finding.

However, as Olsen indicates, even though actors may agree at the macro level on the general mission and values of the University (as an institution), this does not mean that, at the micro level, they do not have conflicts around issues pertaining to their

daily work. Olsen here makes a distinction between the University as an institution (macro level) and the university as an organization (micro-level). The first is a kind of an idea/model; the second is a local reality. Then, as Olsen says, in order to survive, the University becomes a representative democracy strengthening its autonomy through work-place democracy and functional competence where the constitutive logic is enhanced by the interest representation, elections, voting and bargaining. We saw this in the case of Birzeit in the way it developed its organizational structure where academics from different disciplines and departments are represented and are key stakeholders in the decision making process.

However, universities are not only governed by internal factors, they are also affected by environmental elements. In this situation, Olsen claims that universities can be used as instruments for a national political agenda, where autonomy is delegated and the constitutive logic is one of administrative implementation of pre-determined political objectives. In the case of Birzeit, although there is no nation-state, Birzeit together with the other Palestinian universities, founded (in 1977) a semi-state organization, the Palestinian Higher Education Council. The council's agenda was to enhance higher education in Palestine, set standards and help universities in funding and regulating their activities according to the latest international standards. It could also be argued that what Birzeit and other universities have done relates to the strategic behavior of affecting policy rather than being affected by it (Oliver 1991). Rather than being succumbed to the whims of the Israeli state, Birzeit and other HEIs created a legitimate body where they could advance their own agendas and interests.

On the other side, there is another environmental factor, the market. Here, as Olsen points out, universities act as service enterprises embedded in a competitive market place, where the autonomy is empowered through being responsive to the external demands and stakeholders; and the constitutive logic being one of 'community service'. If we look at Birzeit's example, we find that since 1992, the university has been actively involved in the market place, and has developed links with society (industry, social sector, etc.) through establishing community research centers offering feasibility studies and other consultancy services. Today, these centers

contribute with about 30% of the university's total budget, as indicated by one of its leaders.

In the end of this section, we can say that through its different developmental stages and in order to survive, Birzeit selected a range of strategic responses to institutional processes, from acquiescence to manipulation, including compromise and avoidance. On the internal level, Birzeit mixed between being a self governing community of scholars and a representative democracy. On the other side, it did not ignore environmental factors, but responded selectively to the market and social needs. Instead of being an instrument for a national agenda, Birzeit played a role in shaping the national agenda and, as a result, played an active part towards the achievement of its goals. The example of resisting pressures from MoHE to accept more students is a case in point. It could be argued here that the institution is putting itself first (its reputation, prestige, quality) instead of thinking about the social welfare of Palestinian society as a whole (in producing more graduates). However, Birzeit leaders reminded us that no university can accept all students applying to it; “without ensuring that the university has enough resources to accept more students, it will not be able to offer them good education” (University Dean).

## **4.2 Conclusions**

In conclusion we can say that the theories used in this research (institutional theory – notion of imitation/universal templates; resource dependency arguments; cultural arguments) were of great value in helping us to make sense of the data collected in the empirical study. At the same time, the case of Birzeit's has offered us a clear example of how these theories can help explain the survival power of universities.

In our attempt to answer the question “*Can universities survive in the absence of a nation-state?*” the case presented here, that of Birzeit University in Palestine, has taught us that not only is the institution capable of operating in the absence of a nation-state providing it with regulations and funding, but, maybe even more

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importantly, it has managed to survive and prosper despite the existence of an anti-nation-state (Israel), working against it. We can take this line of argument one step further and suggest that this anti-state was (to a great degree) the primary reason for its success, as it brought people together to work against a common goal (survival), creating a strong saga and character in the process.

Although we cannot generalize this result to all universities, it is reasonable to say that, as a case, Birzeit provides a significant example of the survival power of universities. In light of the available literature, Birzeit's case shows that once a university enjoys a strong organizational character (based on a loyal team and shared norms and values), the university uses these elements as a building block for future survival. For a better use of these characteristics Birzeit, as well as the literature, teach us first, about the importance of the University as a universal template independent of time and space which, in the case of the lack of nation-state, can provide it with a framework for operation. This goes with institutional theory and its assumptions which say that organizations working in the same field resemble each other and end up having the same organizational structure.

Second, universities should also be familiar with the experiences of other universities who managed to survive in nearly impossible situations. In the interviews conducted with Birzeit leaders, they referred several times to the lessons they learned from the experience of universities who worked under war and conflict, including the many prestigious universities in Europe and the United States.

Third, this study teaches us that academies should avoid being rigid, trapped in their strong values and identity developed and embedded through the years. As we can conclude from the Birzeit story, one of the main reasons for its ability to survive relates to its strong cultural dimensions; beliefs, values and identity. These have buffered the University from external pressures and changes that contradicted its core mission as a place for academic elitism and social democracy working to offer high quality higher education to Palestinians. However, these values and beliefs were also bridging the university not only between the local society and internal ambitions, but

also between its internal needs to prosper and grow and the interest and support given by international organizations operating in conflict areas.

Finally, as indicated in the literature section, this study shows that in order for the university to maintain its organizational power, it needs to diversify its resources by finding new sources and generating its own income. The strong relation of Birzeit with wealthy Palestinians in Diaspora, its foundation of Birzeit friends' societies in Palestine, Europe and the United states, the activation of its alumni and the increase of its outreach community services, have played an important role insofar as helping Birzeit to be capable to accept/reject funds and policies in accordance to its own values and mission. As one of the University leaders said: "Strong power of an organization has no meaning without strategies for self-reliance".

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. Interview Guide - Birzeit University Leaders \*

1. Introduction: brief explanation of the objectives of my research.
2. Could you let me know, in brief, your academic background and work experience (including the positions that you have had or still have at Birzeit University)?
3. Can you list the main developmental (historical) stages that Birzeit passed through before and after it became a university, until today? Which stages of Birzeit's development have you been part of?
4. What were the motives of establishing Birzeit as a HEI? What is its mission? Who decided how the mission should be defined, and how was it justified? How is it implemented?
5. What was the internal and external situation when Birzeit was moving from one developmental/ historical stage to another, before and after it became a university? What are the challenges and/or opportunities these situations have offered to Birzeit? How has Birzeit responded to these challenges and opportunities?

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\* Due to the time limit for each interview, it was difficult to ask all questions to each interviewee. Questions that were not answered in a given interview, were moved to the next interview so that all questions would be answered by the end of the final interview. Total number of interviews: 13

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6. In the absence of a nation-state to regulate and fund the higher education sector, how and where was Birzeit registered as a HEI? Where has Birzeit obtained its funds and regulations? Who decides which sources these two elements should be based on, and how are they identified? Why has Birzeit chosen to go to these resources? How have these resources supported Birzeit?
  7. Are there any challenges, conditions, and expectations that Birzeit has had to face in order to receive funds and regulations from these resources? If yes, what were they and how did Birzeit respond to them?
  8. What is Birzeit's financial and managerial policy, its recruitment policy and admission policy? What are the bases for these policies?
  9. How does Birzeit make decisions about what kind of teaching or research programs to open? How is it ensured that these programs will be of high quality and standards? What does Birzeit refer to in decisions concerning quality frameworks and standard setting?
  10. What kind of organizational structure does Birzeit have? What are the decision making processes at Birzeit?
  11. Looking back at the questions and answers in this interview, in your opinion, what are the internal characteristics of Birzeit which empower Birzeit and give it the ability to survive under the circumstances it has faced since its foundation? How do these characteristics help Birzeit to survive? To what extent, and how, have these characteristics affected or been affected by the internal and external changes throughout Birzeit's history?

## Appendix 2. Palestinian Higher Education Institutions

مؤسسات التعليم العالي الفلسطينية Palestine Higher Education Institutions						
الرقم الاسم	جهة الاشراف	سنة التأسيس	الموقع	Location	Year of Establishment	Supervision
I-Traditional Universities						
اولاً- الجامعات التقليدية						
1 الازهر	عامة	1991	غزة	Gaza	1991	Public
2 الاسلاميه	عامة	1978	غزة	Gaza	1978	Public
3 الأقصى	حكومية	1991	غزة	Gaza	1991	Governmental
4 الخليل	عامة	1971	الخليل	Hebron	1971	Public
5 بوليتكنك فلسطين	عامة	1978	الخليل	Hebron	1978	Public
6 بيت لحم	عامة	1973	بيت لحم	Bethlehem	1973	Public
7 القدس	عامة	1984	القدس	Al-Quds	1984	Public
8 بير زيت	عامة	1972	بئر زيت	Birzeit	1972	Public
9 النجاح	عامة	1977	نابلس	Nablus	1977	Public
10 العربية الامريكية	خاصة	1997	جنين	Jenin	1997	Private
II-Open Education						
ثانياً- التعليم المفتوح						
1 القدس المفتوحة	حكومية	1991	القدس	Al-Quds	1991	Governmental
III-University Colleges :						
ثالثاً- الكليات الجامعية:						
1 فلسطين التقنية / طولكرم	حكومية	1930	طولكرم	Tulkarm	1930	Governmental
2 فلسطين التقنية / العرب	حكومية	1995	الخليل	Hebron	1995	Governmental
3 فلسطين التقنية / رام الله للبنات	حكومية	1996	رام الله	Ramallah	1996	Governmental
4 فلسطين التقنية / دير البلح	حكومية	1996	دير البلح	Deir Elbalah	1996	Governmental
5 العلوم والتكنولوجيا / خانيونس	حكومية	1983	خانيونس	Khanyounis	1983	Governmental
6 العلوم التربوية / مجتمع المرأة	وكالة الغوث	1992	رام الله	Ramallah	1992	UNRWA
7 العلوم التربوية / مجتمع رام الله	وكالة الغوث	1992	رام الله	Ramallah	1992	UNRWA
8 ابن سينا للتدريب	وزارة الصحة	1997	رام الله	Ramallah	1997	Governmental
9 فلسطين للتدريب / خانيونس	حكومية	1976	خانيونس	Khanyounis	1976	Governmental
10 الدعوة الاسلامية / قلقيلية	وزارة الاوقاف	1999	قلقيلية	Kalkilia	1999	Governmental
11 الدعوة الاسلامية / غزة	وزارة الاوقاف	1999	غزة	Gaza	1999	Governmental
12 كلية بيت لحم للكتاب المقدس	خاصة	2000	بيت لحم	Bethlehem	2000	Private
13 معهد وجدي ابو غربية للتكنولوجيا	خاصة	2004	القدس	Al-Quds	2004	Private
IV- Community Colleges :						
رابعاً- الكليات المتوسطة :						
1 الامة	حكومية	1952	القدس	Al-Quds	1952	Governmental
2 الابراهيمية	خاصة	1983	القدس	Al-Quds	1983	Private
3 العصرية	خاصة	1982	رام الله	Ramallah	1982	Private
4 الروضة	خاصة	1982	نابلس	Nablus	1982	Private
5 النجاح	عامة	1990	نابلس	Nablus	1990	Public
6 هشام حجازي للتكنولوجيا	خاصة	2000	نابلس	Nablus	2000	Private
7 المهن التطبيقية - بوليتكنك فلسطين	عامة	1992	الخليل	Hebron	1992	Public
8 الدراسات المتوسطة - الازهر	عامة	1978	غزة	Gaza	1978	Public
9 العلوم المهنية والتطبيقية - الاسلامية	عامة	1979	غزة	Gaza	1979	Public
10 المجتمع العربية / رفح	خاصة	1990	رفح	Rafah	1990	Private
11 تدريب غزة	وكالة الغوث	1953	غزة	Gaza	1953	UNRWA
12 غزة السياحية	خاصة	2004	غزة	Gaza	2004	Private
13 صحة المجتمع	عامة	1992	رام الله	Ramallah	1992	Public
14 الخليل للتدريب	خاصة	1970	الخليل	Hebron	1970	Private
15 الحاجة عذليب المعد للتدريب	عامة	1970	نابلس	Nablus	1970	Public
16 كلية التمريض - جمعية امعائ الاسرة	عامة	1999	رام الله	Ramallah	1999	Public
17 كلية التمريض - مستشفى الكاريتاس	عامة	2000	بيت لحم	Bethlehem	2000	Public
18 كلية التمريض - مستشفى المقاصد	عامة	2000	القدس	Al-Quds	2000	Public
19 كلية مجتمع طائيتا قومي	خاصة	2000	بيت لحم	Bethlehem	2000	Private

Resource: Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoHE), (2005)

### Appendix 3. Birzeit: History - Chronological

Year	Event
1924	Birzeit established as an elementary school by Nabiha Nasir (1891-1951)
1930	Birzeit established as a coeducational secondary school
1932	Birzeit is known as Birzeit High School
1942	Birzeit High School became Birzeit College
1953	Birzeit offers first-year university-level courses in Arts and Science
1961	Birzeit College offers second-year university level courses in Arts and Science
1962	Birzeit grants associate degrees upon completion of the two-year courses, enabling students to transfer to other universities in the Arab world and elsewhere.
1961-1967	Birzeit gradually eliminates its elementary, preparatory and high school program and by 1967 limits its scope to first and second year college level programs.
1972	Birzeit College launches a four-year program leading to Bachelors' degrees in Arts and Sciences.
1973	An autonomous Board of Trustees is formed to assume full responsibility for the Institution
1973	Israel closed the campus by military order for two weeks. This was the first of many repressive measures against the University community.
1975	Birzeit College changes its name and becomes " Birzeit University "
1976	Birzeit University is accepted in April as a member of the Association of Arab Universities
1976	Birzeit University holds its first graduation ceremony with a bachelor's degree on July 11, 1976.
1977	Birzeit University is accepted as a member of the International Association of Universities
1977	The first graduate programs are developed at Birzeit University
1978	Faculty of Commerce and Economics is established
1979	The Faculty of Engineering is established
1988	The University is closed for the 15th and what would prove to be the last time on January 8th. The closure lasts for 51 months till April 29th 1992. During this prolonged period of closure, the University continued to operate underground with small study groups in makeshift arrangements outside the campus. Under such conditions, many students needed as long as 10 years to complete their four-year degree courses.
1996	Faculty of Graduate Studies is established
2004	Faculty of Law and Public Administration is established
2006	Faculty of Information Technology is established

*Source: Birzeit University 2009*